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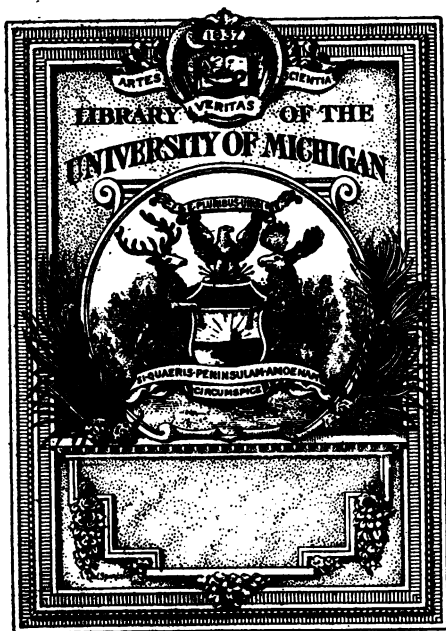
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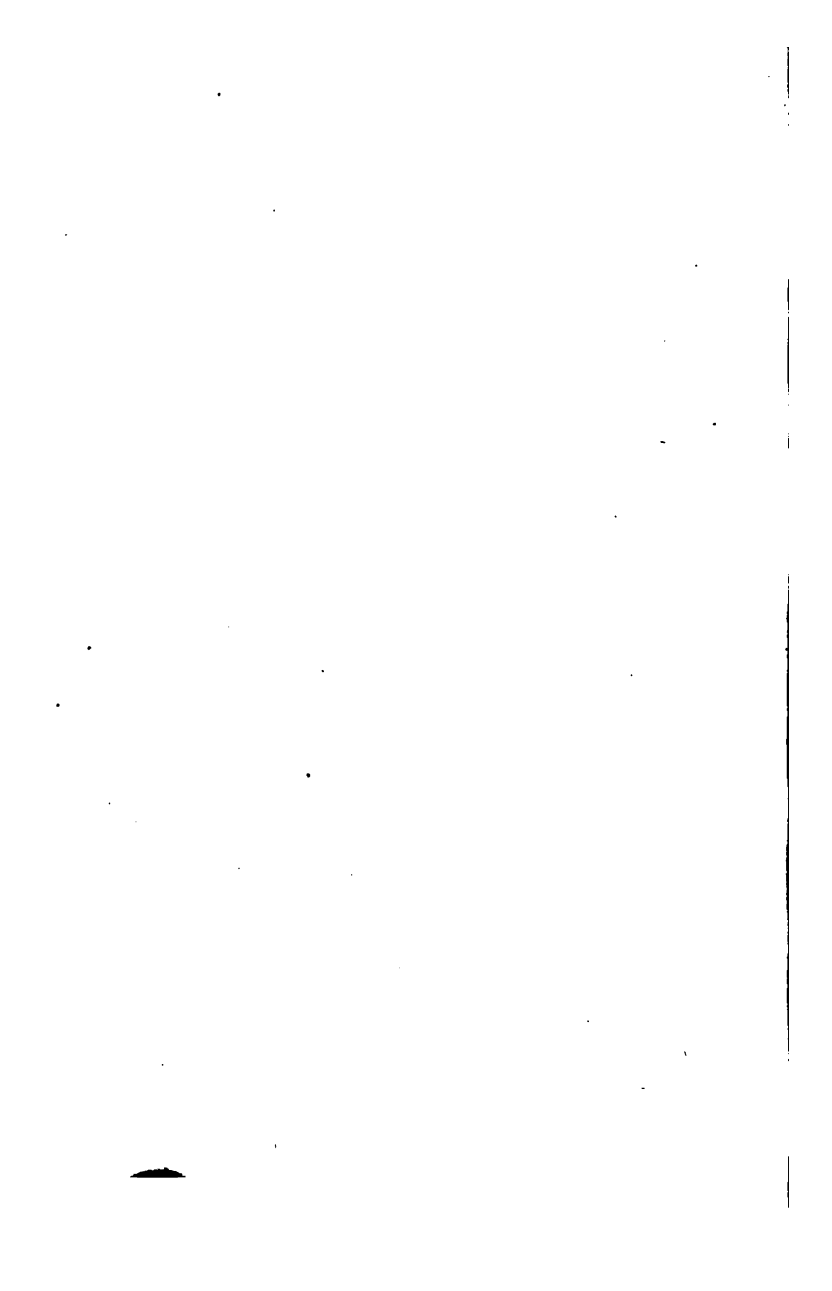
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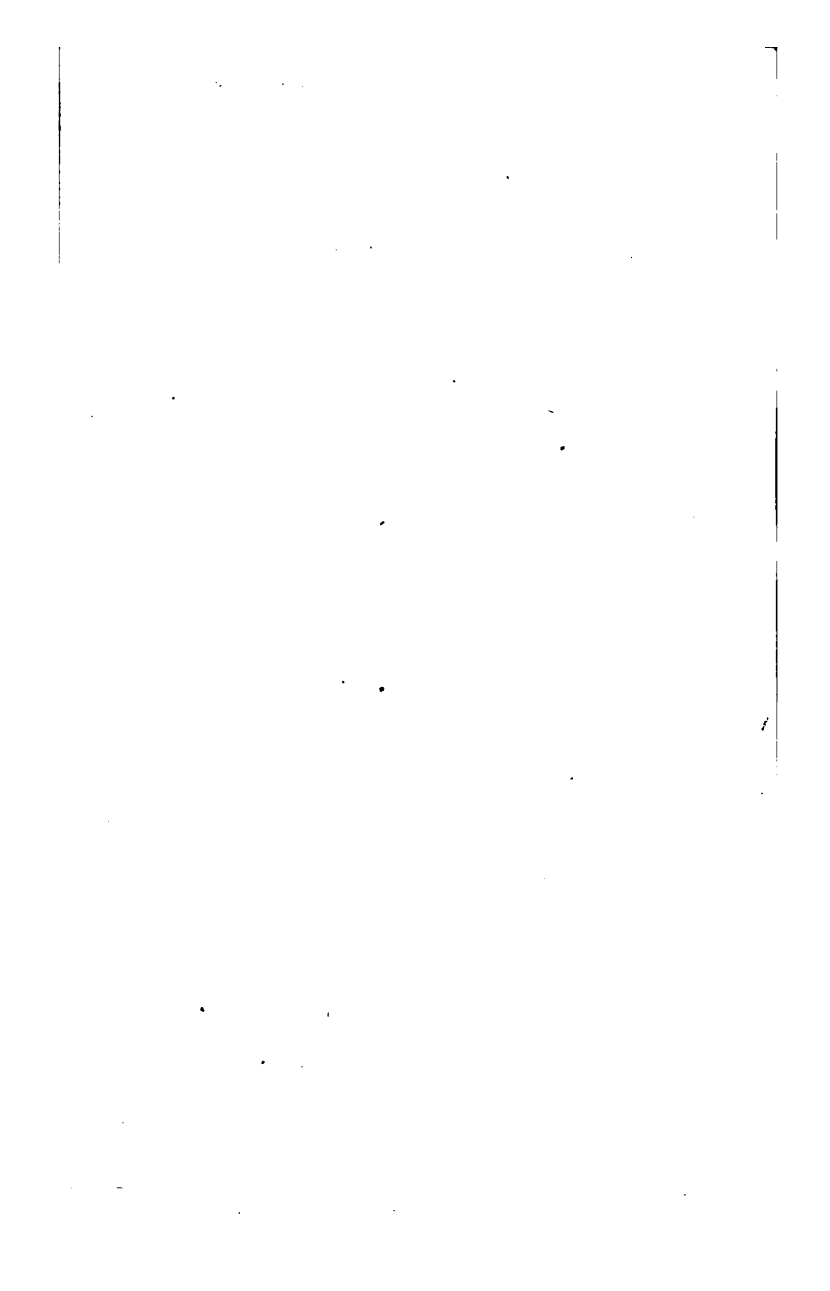


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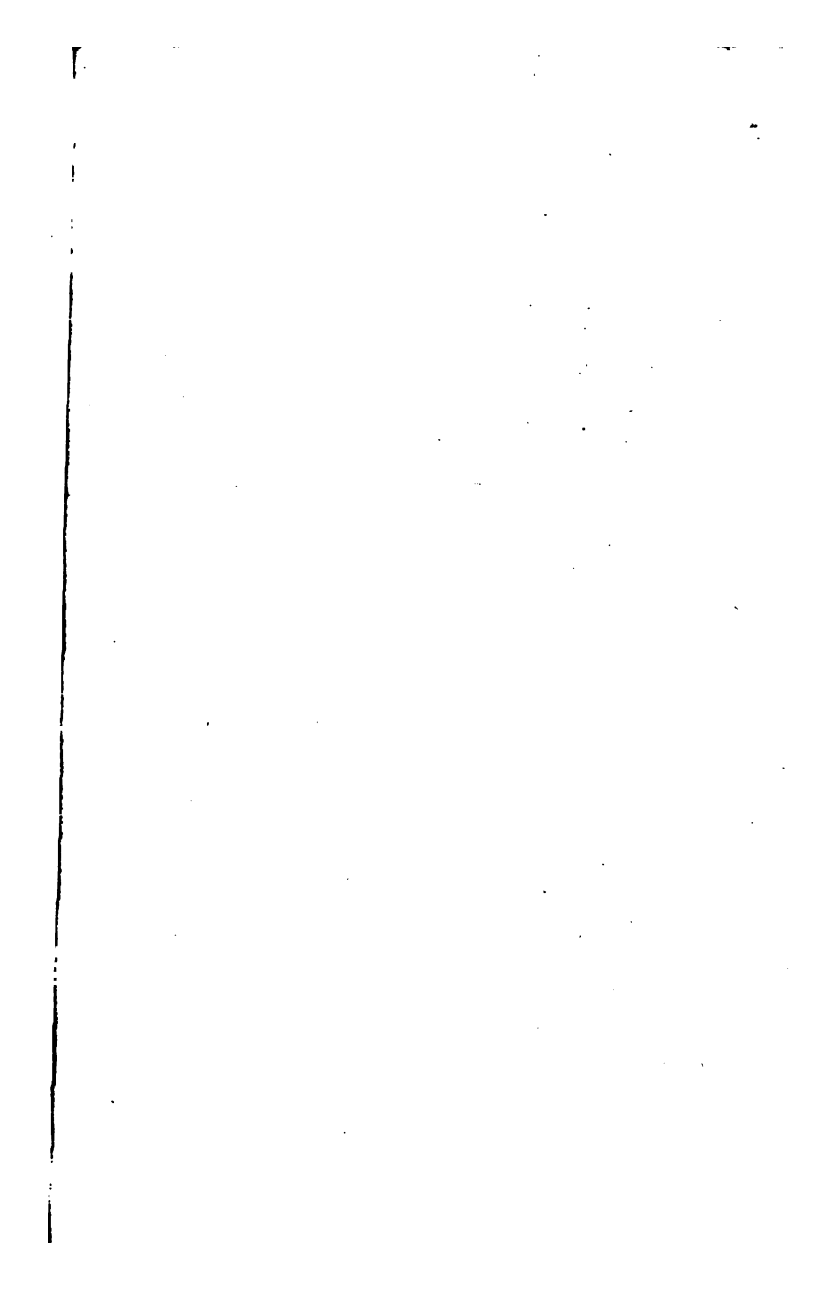
1839

v. 4



THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
LETITIA ELIZABETH LONDON.

THE VENETIAN BRACELET.





Painted by E. Howard, R.A.

Engraved by W. Hinde.

She sought the fountain, and flung there
 The crown that bound her raven hair;
 The starry crown, the sparkles died,
 Darkening within its fated tide.
 She sinks by that lone wave.

Lost Melod p. 81.

THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF 77366

LETITIA ELIZABETH LANDON.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

A NEW EDITION.

VOLUME IV.

THE VENETIAN BRACELET.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

DIFFIDENCE of their own abilities, and fear, which heightens the anxiety for public favour, are pleas usually urged by the youthful writer : may I, while venturing for the first time to speak of myself, be permitted to say they far more truly belong to one who has had experience of both praise and censure. The feelings which attended the publication of the “*Improvisatrice*” are very different from those that accompany the present volume. I believe I *then* felt little

beyond hope, vague as the timidity which subdued it, and that excitement which every author must know: *now* mine is a "farther looking hope;" and the timidity which apprehended the verdict of others, is now deepened by distrust of my own powers. Or, to claim my poetical privilege, and express my meaning by a simile, I should say, I am no longer one who springs forward in the mere energy of exercise and enjoyment; but rather like the Olympian racer, who strains his utmost vigour, with the distant goal and crown in view. I have devoted my whole life to one object: in society I have but sought the material for solitude. I can imagine but one interest in existence,—that which has filled my past, and haunts my future,—the perhaps vain desire, when

I am nothing, of leaving one of those memories at once a good and a glory. Believing as I do in the great and excellent influence of poetry, may I hazard the expression of what I have myself sometimes trusted to do? A highly-cultivated state of society must ever have for concomitant evils, that selfishness, the result of indolent indulgence; and that heartlessness attendant on refinement, which too often hardens while it polishes. Aware that to elevate I must first soften, and that if I wished to purify I must first touch, I have ever endeavoured to bring forward grief, disappointment, the fallen leaf, the faded flower, the broken heart, and the early grave. Surely we must be less worldly, less interested, from this sympathy with the

sorrow in which our unselfish feelings alone can take part. And now a few words on a subject, where the variety of the opinions offered have left me somewhat in the situation of the prince in the fairy tale, who, when in the vicinity of the magic fountain, found himself so distracted by the multitude of voices that directed his way, as to be quite incapable of deciding which was the right path. I allude to the blame and eulogy which have been equally bestowed on my frequent choice of Love as my source of song. I can only say, that for a woman, whose influence and whose sphere must be in the affections, what subject can be more fitting than one which it is her peculiar province to refine, spiritualise, and exalt? I have always sought to paint it self-

denying, devoted, and making an almost religion of its truth ; and I must add, that such as I would wish to draw her, woman actuated by an attachment as intense as it is true, as pure as it is deep, is not only more admirable as a heroine, but also in actual life, than one whose idea of love is that of light amusement, or at worst of vain mortification. With regard to the frequent application of my works to myself, considering that I sometimes portrayed love unrequited, then betrayed, and again destroyed by death — may I hint the conclusions are not quite logically drawn, as assuredly the same mind cannot have suffered such varied modes of misery. However, if I must have an unhappy passion, I can only console myself with my own perfect unconsciousness of

so great a misfortune. I now leave the following Poems to their fate : they must speak for themselves. I could but express my anxiety, an anxiety only increased by a popularity beyond my most sanguine dreams.

With regard to those whose former praise encouraged, their best recompense is the happiness they bestowed. And to those whose differing opinion expressed itself in censure, I own, after the first chagrin was past, I never laid down a criticism by which I did not benefit, or trust to benefit. I will conclude by apostrophising the hopes and fears they excited, in the words of the Mexican king — “ Ye have been the feathers of my wings.”

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THE

VENETIAN BRACELET.

**Those subtle poisons which made science crime,
And knowledge a temptation ; could we doubt
One moment the great curse upon our world,
We must believe, to find that even good
May thus be turn'd to evil.**



THE
VENETIAN BRACELET.

ANOTHER tale of thine ! fair Italie —
What makes my lute, my heart, aye turn to thee ?
I do not know thy language, — that is still
Like the mysterious music of the rill ; —
And neither have I seen thy cloudless sky,
Where the sun hath his immortality ;
Thy cities crown'd with palaces, thy halls
Where art's great wonders light the storied walls ;
Thy fountains' silver sweep, thy groves, where dwell
The rose and orange, summer's citadel ;

Thy songs that rise at twilight on the air,
Wedding the breath thy thousand flowers sigh there ;
Thy tales of other times, thy marble shrines,
Lovely though fallen, — for the ivy twines
Its graceful wreath around each ruin'd fane,
As still in some shape beauty would remain.
I know them not, yet, Italie, thou art
The promised land that haunts my dreaming heart.
Perchance it is as well thou art unknown :
I could not bear to lose what I have thrown
Of magic round thee, — but to find in thee
What hitherto I still have found in all —
'Thou art not stamp'd with that reality
Which makes our being's sadness, and its thrall !
But now, whenever I am mix'd too much
With worldly natures till I feel as such ; —

(For these are as the waves that turn to stone,
Till feelings keep their outward show alone) —
When wearied by the vain, chill'd by the cold,
Impatient of society's set mould —
The many meannesses, the petty cares,
The long avoidance of a thousand snares,
The lip that must be chain'd, the eye so taught
To image all but its own actual thought; —
(Deceit is this world's passport : who would dare,
However pure the breast, to lay it bare ?) —
When worn, my nature struggling with my fate,
Checking my love, but, oh, still more my hate ; —
(Why should I love ? flinging down pearl and gem
To those who scorn, at least care not for them :
Why should I hate ? as blades in scabbards melt,
I have no power to make my hatred felt ;

Or, I should say, my sorrow : — I have borne
So much unkindness, felt so lone, so lorn,
I could but weep, and tears may not redress,
They only fill the cup of bitterness) —
Wearied of this, upon what eager wings
My spirit turns to thee, and bird-like flings
Its best, its breath, its spring, and song o'er thee,
My lute's enchanted world, fair Italie.
To me thou art a vision half divine,
Of myriad flowers lit up with summer shine :
The passionate rose, the violet's Tyrian dye,
The wild bee loves them not more tenderly ;
Of vineyards like Aladdin's gem set hall,
Fountains like fairy ones with music's fall ;
Of sorrows, too ; for e'en on this bright soil
Grief has its shadow, and care has its coil,

But e'en amid its darkness and its crime,
Touch'd with the native beauty of such clime,
Till wonder rises with each gushing tear : —
And hath the serpent brought its curse even here ?

Such is the tale that haunts me : I would fain
Wake into pictured life the heart's worst pain ;
And seek I if pale cheek and tearful eye
Answer the notes that wander sadly by.
And say not this is vain, in our cold world,
Where feelings sleep, like wither'd leaves upfurl'd :
'Tis much to wash them with such gentle rain,
Calling their earlier freshness back again.
The heart of vanity, the head of pride,
Touch'd by such sorrow, are half purified ;
And we rise up less selfish, having known
Part in deep grief, yet that grief not our own.

I.

They stood beside the river, that young pair —
She with her eyes cast down, for tears were there,
Glittering upon the eyelash, though unshed ;
He murmuring those sweet words so often said
By parting lover, still as fondly spoken
As his could be, the only ones not broken.
The girl was beautiful ; her forehead high
Was white as are the marble fanes that lie
On Grecian lands, making a fitting shrine
Where the mind spoke ; the arch'd and raven line
Was very proud, but that was soften'd now, —
Only sad tenderness was on her brow.
She wore the peasant dress, — the snowy lawn
Closely around her whiter throat was drawn,

A crimson bodice, and the skirt of blue
So short, the fairy ankle was in view ;
The arm was hidden by the long loose sleeve,
 But the small hand was snow ; around her hair
A crimson net, such as the peasants weave,
 Bound the rich curls, and left the temples bare.
She wore the rustic dress, but there was not
Aught else in her that mark'd the rustic's lot :
Her bearing seem'd too stately, though subdued
By all that makes a woman's gentlest mood —
The parting hour of love. And there they leant,
Mirror'd below in the clear element
That roll'd along, with wild shrubs overhung,
And colour'd blossoms that together clung —
That peasant girl, that high-born cavalier,
Whispering those gentle words so sweet to hear,

And answer'd by flush'd cheek, and downcast eye,
And roselip parted, with half smile, half sigh.
Young, loving, and beloved, — these are brief words,
And yet they touch on all the finer chords,
Whose music is our happiness : the tone
May die away and be no longer known
In the harsh wisdom brought by after years,
Lost in that worldliness which scars and sears,
And makes the misery of life's troubled scene ; —
Still it is much to think that it has been.
They loved with such deep tenderness and truth, —
Feelings forsaking us as does our youth, —
They did not dream that love like theirs could die,
And such belief half makes eternity.
Yes, they were parting ; still the fairy hope
Had in their clear horizon ample scope

For her sweet promises, without the showers
That are their comrades in life's after hours.
They parted trustingly ; they did not know
The vanity of youthful trust and vow ;
And each believed the other, — for each read
In their own hearts the truth of what each said.
The dews are drying rapidly : — away,
Young warrior ! those far banners chide thy stay.
Hark ! the proud trumpet swells upon the wind, —
His first of fields, he must not be behind.

The maiden's cheek flush'd crimson, and her eye
Flash'd as the martial music floated by.
She saw him spring upon his snow-white steed, —
It dash'd across the plain with arrowy speed.
The beat of heart, the flush of cheek, are gone,
AMENAÏDE but felt she was alone.

The vow which soothed her, and the hope which
cheer'd,

The pride which nerved, with him had disappear'd.

"LEONI, dear LEONI!" — 'twas in vain : —

The mocking echo answer'd her again.

— It is deep wretchedness, this passionate burst

Of parting's earlier grief, but not the worst ;

It is the lingering days of after care,

That try the wasted spirit most to bear.

Now listless, languid, as the world had left

Nothing to interest, of him bereft ;

Now lull'd by opiate thoughts that but restore

The mind its tone, to make it sink the more ;

Now fever'd by anxiety, for rife

Are fears when fancy calls them into life ;

And then that nameless dread of coming woe,
Which only those who've felt it e'er can know:
These still have been in absence, still will be,
And these, AMENAÏDE, were all for thee.

The valley in a summer twilight lay —
That fairy confine of the night and day —
When leant AMENAÏDE behind the shade
The fragrant shrubs around her lattice made,
'Scaped from her nurse, and each consoling phrase
Sinking the spirit that it fain would raise.
The room was small and dark; but when the wind
Moved the green branches of the myrtle-blind,
A crimson beauty wooed the maiden's eye : —
She look'd and saw, where, dark against the sky,
His father's battlements rose on the air ; —
Alas, how haughty and how high they were !

An orphan she, a rustic's nursling child,

Oh, how could hope have ever so beguiled !

“ AMENAÏDE !” her kind old nurse's voice ;

“ Nay, come to me, dear child, come and rejoice.”

Wondering, she enters, strangers round her stand,

And kindly takes their lordly chief her hand.

“ So fair a peasant, sooth, but it is shame

To tell thee, maiden, of another name.

In the wild troubles which have rent our state

Thy noble father met an exile's fate : —

Nay, not that anxious look ; he is no more,

And sorrowing Genoa can but restore

His honours to his child : I was aware,

Thanks to that faithful creature's parent care,

His daughter lived ; and dear the task to me

To bring these words, and let AREZZI be

The first to greet and honour, Countess, mine,
Loveliest, and last of ALFIORI's line.

II.

Fit for a palace was that lovely room,
Hung with the azure of an eastern loom,
And carpeted with velvet, where the flowers
Companion'd those whereon the April hours
Had shed their beauty ; numbers stood around
Of vases where each varying hue was found,
From the white myrtle-bud and lily-bell,
Like pearls that in the ocean-waters dwell,
To those rich tints which on the tulip lie,
Telling their southern birth and sunny sky,
The wine-cups of the sun : — each silken blind
Waved to and fro upon the scented wind,

Now closing till the twilight-haunted room
Was in an atmosphere of purple gloom,
First scarcely letting steal one crimson ray,
Then flung all open to the glowing day.
Pictures were hung above ; how more than fair !
The changing light made almost life seem there.
A faint rose-colour wander'd o'er the cheek,
Seem'd the chance beams from each dark eye to
break ;
And you could deem each braided auburn wave
Moved, as its gold the glancing sun-light gave.
And fitting mistress had the charmed scene :
Leant, like a beautiful and eastern queen,
Upon a purple couch — how soft and warm
Clung the rich colour to her ivory arm ! —

AMENAÏDE reclined. Awhile she lay, —
Then, as if movement hurried time away,
She paced the room, gazed on each pictured face, —
Then wreath'd the flowers, — then watch'd, as if to
trace

The evening close : again the couch was press'd,
But feverish, restless, more for change than rest :
And yet all this was only the excess
Of overmuch impatient happiness.
Many a weary hour and day had past
For that young Countess, — this day was the last.
He was return'd, with all war could confer
Of honourable name, to home and her.

LEONI would to-night be in the hall
Where Count AREZZI held his festival,
Would hear her history ; how there was now
Nothing to chain the heart or check the vow.

— And must they meet first in a careless crowd ?
This was a moment's grief ; though she felt proud
That he should see how well she could beseem
Her present rank, yet keep her early dream ;
See her the worship'd of the courtly throng,
Sigh of each lip, and idol of each song ;
Hear the fair flatteries offer'd, yet behold
Her courtesy so graceful, but so cold ;
And know it was for him her heart's young throne
Was ever kept, the lovely and the lone.

III.

O pleasant was that night the toilet's care —
What broider'd robe to don, what gems to wear !
Her hair was parted on her brow, each braid
Black as the dark-wing'd raven's darkest shade,

And gather'd up with diamonds,—few there were —
Just stars to light the midnight of her hair.
Well did the sweeping robe of emerald green,
Wrought in rich gold, suit with her stately mien.
“ How beautiful she looks this evening !” burst
From every lip, when that fair Countess first
Enter'd AREZZI's hall : her heart's content
To every lighted look its lustre lent.
Her beauty's fault had been, it was too cold ;
Features too tranquil in their perfect mould,
A cheek somewhat too pale ; but not to-night —
The eye was sparkling, and the cheek was bright.
Gently she glided to a balustrade,
Where jessamine a pleasant shadow made :
It raised no marvel ; never had her hand
With its white beauty link'd the saraband ;

And seldom did she join the converse gay,
Where the light flattery gains its gilded way :
They seldom won more than a few cold words,
As when unskilful hands awake the chords
Of some lorn lute, the music of whose tone
Lives for one touch, and only for that one.
She dwelt within the circle of her heart,
A charm'd world, lovely, lonely, and apart,
Where it had seem'd to her as sin and shame
Aught there had enter'd, not in his dear name.
— It was a spell-touch'd hour. That gorgeous hall,
With perfume floating and with music's fall,
Light steps, and gentle laugh, and whispers bland,—
Was it their words or the sweet airs that fann'd
The beauty's cheek into a redder rose ? —
And starry eyes, like what the clear night shows,

But wandering ones ; and there were golden curls
Like sudden sunshine ; and dark braids, whose pearls
Were lost on the white neck when there they fell ;
And there were shapes, such as in pictures dwell ;
It look'd like fairy land. With eager glance
She watch'd the door, and counted every dance ;
Then time grew long, hope caught a shade of fear —
“ LEONI — but they said he would be here ! ”
When sudden came AREZZI to her side, —
“ Look there, the Count LEONI and his bride !
She with the violet wreath in her bright hair ;
Sooth but to say, that English bride is fair !
But I must go and have my welcome paid.”
Alone AMENAÏDE stood in the shade, —
Alone ! ay, utterly. A couch was nigh,
And there she sank — oh, had it been to die !

IV.

Alas for the young heart thus early thrown
Back on itself, the unloved and the lone !
For this should be the lesson of long years,
The weary knowledge taught and traced by tears,
Till even those are frozen, and we grow
Cold as the grave that yawns for us below :
But this was like those sudden blasts that fling
Unlook'd-for winter on the face of spring, —
And worst woe for the heart, whose early fate
Leaves it so young, and, oh, so desolate.
She had one feeling left — it was of pride —
Oh, misery, how much she had to hide !
And steps were now approaching her : she sprung
From off the couch, and every nerve was strung

For that worst rack, the rack of outward show,
Still haunts such vanity the deepest woe.
The heart may swell to bursting, but the while
The features wear the seeming of a smile :
The eye be lesson'd, and the lip be seal'd,
And wretchedness be, like the plague, conceal'd.
— It was the Count AREZZI : “ What, still here! —
Come, thou wild dreamer of another sphere,
I must shut out the sky, if thus it share
My stars, thine eyes, which should be shining there,
Making yon hall its equal ; but to-night
You have, AMENAÏDE, a rival light.
The English bride, — see round they crowd to gaze
On the new loveliness her form displays.
Why, she should bear the name which once you bore,
— The peasant countess, — it would suit her more.”

A moment, and the group were press'd aside,
She stood before LEONI and his bride.
He knew her history, and each met prepared ;
Cold looks were given, careless converse shared :
At first LEONI shunn'd to meet her eye, —
A moment's awkwardness, — but that pass'd by.
How much we give to other hearts our tone,
And judge of others' feelings by our own !
Himself was alter'd : — all he sought to do
Was to believe that she was alter'd too.
Her cheek was paler than 'twas wont to be, —
That was its round of midnight gaiety :
Her smile less frequent, and her brow more grave, —
'Twas her new rank its stateliness that gave :
New friends press'd round, — their interview is o'er, —
And he pass'd on, to think of it no more ;

And she to seem as thoughtless. Till to-night,
Like some fair planet in its own far light,
She shone apart ; to-night she sought the crowd,
Join'd in their mirthfulness, and laugh'd aloud ;
Was ready with gay converse, — that light mirth
Which like the meteor has from darkness birth :
She watch'd her circle, — ready smile or sneer, —
Sneers for the absent ones, smiles for the near,
Till every other hall sent forth its tide,
And half the guests were gather'd at her side.
It was an evil feeling that which now .
Flush'd on her cheek, and lighted up her brow —
Part bitterness, part vanity, part woe —
The passionate strife which pride and misery know ;
A burning wish to wake a vain regret
In that false one, who now had best forget ;

To show LEONI how that she, the queen,
Made his fair EDITH nothing on the scene :
Her rival — hers — language has not a word
By woman's ear so utterly abhorr'd.
No marvel, for it robs her only part
Of sweet dominion — empire o'er the heart.

V.

LEONI and his bride have left the hall.
Why does that cheek grow pale, that dark eye fall ?
Why does that lip its wit, its smiling cease ? —
It only pass'd for beauty's gay caprice.
She left the feast — but, oh, not yet alone ;
Many a cavalier has eager flown
Upon her gondola's home course to wait,
And sigh farewell at her own palace-gate.

Her maidens gather'd round. What more, yet more,
To read the breast now throbbing to the core?
She hurried not their task, — each silken braid
Of raven hair was in set order laid :
But once she show'd her weakness, — when her hand
Strove vainly to unloose a glittering band,
It trembled like a leaf : — but that pass'd by ;
Struggle she might, but no one heard her sigh ;
And when her last good night was courteous said,
Never more queenlike seem'd that lofty head.
The last step died upon the marble stair, —
She sprang towards the door, — the bolt is there : —
She tried the spring, gave one keen look around,
Mutter'd “ alone ! ” and dash'd her on the ground.
Corpse-like she lay, — her dark hair wildly thrown
Far on the floor before her ; white as stone,

As rigid stretch'd each hand,—her face was press'd
Close to the earth ; and but the heaving vest
Told of some pang the shuddering frame confess'd,
She seem'd as stricken down by instant death. —
Sudden she raised her head, and gasp'd for breath ;
And nature master'd misery. She sought,
Panting, the air from yonder lattice brought.
Ah, there is blood on that white lip and brow ! —
She struggles still—in vain — she must weep now :
She wept, childlike, till sleep began to press
Upon her eyes, for very weariness.
She sleeps !—so sleeps the wretch beside the stake :
She sleeps !—how dreadful from such sleep to wake !

VI.

She was both proud and cold : not hers the heart
Easy to lure, and ready to depart —

A trifle, toy — but that fair Countess gave
No common gift when she became a slave ;
And only did she hold her gift redeem'd,
By that high worthiness she had but dream'd.
A peasant, yet she felt his equal still ;
And when her lofty state beseem'd her will,
It was such pride, such pleasure, to have known
LEONI'S love was for herself alone.
And in her young romance's loftier view
One touch of vanity might mingle too :
It was the triumph of her lowlier state
She had been even then a noble's mate.
AMENAÏDE had many faults ; her youth
Had seen too soon life's bitterness and truth :
The cutting word, the cold or scornful look,
All that her earlier days had had to brook —

The many slights the humble one receives —
Lay on her memory like wither'd leaves ;
And homage from the crowd, and lovers' praise,
Were all too apt disgust and doubt to raise.
There was a something wayward in her mood ;
She left her heart too much to solitude :
For kindly thoughts are social ; but she held
A scornful creed, and sympathy repell'd.
That sullen barrier had one gentle break —
She loved, — she loved, — and for LEONI's sake
Believed there were some angel steps on earth : —
As truth that keeps the promise of its birth ;
As faith that will not change, that will not tire,
And deems its gold the purer for the fire.
Her love was all her nature's better part,
The confidence, the kindness of her heart

The source of all the sweet or gentle there :
But this was past — what had it left? — despair !

VII.

The wind threw back the curtain fraught with rose :—
Can sorrow be upon such gales as those ?
Yes, for it waked the Countess. Up she sprung,
Startled, surprised, to see how she was flung
By the veranda, — and that open, too ;
Her hair was heavy with the weight of dew ;
Scarcely aroused, painful and slow she raised
Her weary head, and round in wonder gazed.
It was her own fair room, — some frightful dream,
But indistinct, — she struggled with a scream :
Her eye has caught a mirror, — that pale face, —
Why lip and brow are sullied by the trace

Of blood ; its stain is on her tangled hair,
Which shroud-like hides the neck that else were bare.
Around that neck there is a fragile chain,
And memory's flood comes rushing o'er her brain :
LEONI's gift, — its slight gold links are broken, —
So are the vows of which it was the token.
Who has not loathed that worst, that waking hour,
When grief and consciousness assert their power ;
When misery has morn's freshness, yet we fain
Would hold it as a dream, and sleep again ;
Then know 'tis not illusion of the night,
And sicken at the cold and early light ?
How ever shall we pass the weary day,
When thus we shudder at its opening ray ?
She gazed upon the glass, then glanced around,
In wonder at the contrast which she found.

The walls were faintly colour'd with the bloom
Which comes when morn has struggled through the
 gloom,

And blushes for success : the silken veil
Of the blue hangings seem'd to catch the gale,
Then keep its sweetness prisoner : on the floor
The Persian loom had spread its velvet store :
Vases stood round, each carved with such fine art,
'The flowers that fill'd seem'd of themselves a part ;
A sandal lute lay on an inlaid stand,
Whose rich wrought ivory spoke its Indian land ;
Shells of bright colours, foreign toys of gold,
And crystals wrought in many a curious mould ;
Pictures, a prince's ransom in their worth ;
Small alabaster statues — all that earth

Has rich or varied, all that wealth could buy,
Loathing she turn'd. " Yet what a wretch am I !
This must not be ! — stain'd cheek and fever'd brow
Too much the secret of my soul avow.
Aye deep as is the grave my heart shall keep
What burning tears AMENAÏDE could weep.
Oh, never let LEONI know the worst :
'Tis well if he believe I changed the first.
Too much e'en to myself has been reveal'd,
— And thus be every trace of tears conceal'd."
She sought the alcove where the fountain play'd,
And wash'd from lip and cheek their crimson shade;
And bathed her long hair, till its glossy curls
Wore not a trace but of the dewy pearls
The waters left, as if in pity shed ;
She loosed the bolt, and sought her silken bed ;

But easier far had been the rack, the wheel : —
When hath the body felt what mind can feel ?

VII.

The weary day pass'd on — night came again : —
AMENAÏDE has join'd the glittering train ;
Self-torturer — self-deceiver — cold and high,
She said it was to mock the curious eye.
Such strength is weakness. Was it not to be
Where still, LEONI, she might gaze on thee ?
— She heard the history of his English bride :
A patient nurse at her pale mother's side
LEONI saw her first : — that mother's hand
(A stranger she and wanderer in the land)
Gave the sweet orphan to his care, — and here
Was all to soften, all that could endear.

Together wept they o'er the funeral stone,
His the sole heart she had to lean upon.
Now months had pass'd away, and he was come
To bring his beautiful, his dear one home.
Her beauty was like morning's, breathing, bright,
Eyes glittering first with tears, and then with light,
And blue, too glad to be the violet's blue,
But that which hangs upon it, lucid dew, —
Its first clear moment, ere the sun has burst
The azure radiance which it kindled first ; —
A cheek of thousand blushes ; golden hair,
As if the summer sunshine made it fair ;
A voice of music, and such touching smile,
AMENAÏDE sigh'd, " Well might they beguile !"
— Love, what a mystery thou art ! — how strange
Thy constancy, yet still more so thy change !

How the same love, born in the self-same hour,
Holds over different hearts such different power ;
How the same feeling lighted in the breast
Makes one so wretched, and makes one so blest ;
How one will keep the dream of passion born
In youth with all the freshness of its morn ;
How from another will thine image fade !
Far deeper records on the sand are made.
—Why hast thou separate being ? why not die
At once in both, and not leave one to sigh,
To weep, to rave, to struggle with the chains
Pride would fling off, but memory retains ?
There are remembrances that will not vanish, —
Thoughts of the past we would but cannot banish :
As if to show how impotent mere will,
We loathe the pang, and yet must suffer still :

For who is there can say they will forget?

— It is a power no science teaches yet.

Oh love, how sacred thy least words should be,

When on them hangs such abject misery !

VIII.

The fountain's music murmur'd through the grove,

Like the first plaint that sorrow teaches love ;

The orange boughs shut out the sultry sky,

While their rich scent, as pass'd the Countess by,

Came homage like. For hours that chesnut-tree —

. The only one that grew there — wont to be

Her favourite summer-seat ; — but now she paced

Hurriedly, though 'twas noon ; her memory traced

Her galling wrongs, and many an evil thought

Envy and hatred in her bosom wrought.

She felt LEONI had not loved till now ;
Hers was but youthful fantasy's light vow.
Had he not trifled with her ?—She, the proud,
The cold, had of such mocking suit allow'd.
Her heart was wrung, and worse, her pride was bow'd.
—She hears a step : who is it dares intrude
On this her known and guarded solitude ?
She sees an aged Jew ; a box he bore
Fill'd with gay merchandise and jewell'd store.
Ere she could speak, he spread before her eyes
Those glittering toys that loveliest ladies prize :—
“ Fair dame, in sooth so fair thou seem'st to be,
That almost it is vain to offer thee
The many helps for meaner beauty made :
But yet these gems would light that dark hair's shade ;

Well would these pearls around that white throat
show

Each purple vein that wanders through its snow.”

Angrily turned the Countess, — “ Fool, away ! ” —

“ So young, so fair, has vanity no sway ? —

But I have things most curious, and ’mid these

Somewhat may chance your wayward fancy please.”

— He took a bracelet, — ’twas of fine wrought gold,

And twisted as a serpent, whose lithe fold

Curl’d round the arm : — he spoke in whispering tone —

“ Here, lady, look at this, I have but ~~one~~ :

Here, press this secret spring ; it lifts a lid, —

Beneath there is the subtlest poison hid.

I come from Venice ; of the wonders there

There is no wonder like this bracelet rare.”

She started — evil thoughts, at first repress'd,
Now struggled like a storm within her breast.
Alas ! alas ! how plague-spot like will sin
Spread over the wrung heart it enters in !
Her brow grew dark : — “ Amid thy baubles shine
This ruby cross, — but be the bracelet mine.”
Around her arm the fatal band is fast ;
Away its seller, like a vision, pass'd.

IX.

That night she join'd the revel ; but not long
AMENAÏDE was seen amid the throng.
No eye beheld her pace her lonely room :
Fearing the light, yet trembling in the gloom ;
The ghastly cheek, as marble cold and white ;
The wild eye flashing with unholy light ;

The quivering lip, the forehead's dew-moist pore,
The sudden start, the rapid step once more, —
As if it would annihilate the time : —
But who may paint the solitude of crime ?

X.

That night there was another saddest scene :
Halls where mirth, music, festival had been
Were as the house of mourning ; crowds stood nigh,
Horror and pity mark'd in every eye.
— Upon a crimson couch — a contrast strange
To those pale features in that ghastly change —
The young, the beautiful, the happy lay,
Life passing in convulsive sobs away.
Still mid her hair the red rose wreath was hung,
Mocking her cheek with the rich dye it flung ;

The festal robe still sparkled as it flow'd ;
Still on her neck a few fresh flowers glow'd :
The warmth her sandal'd foot hath scarcely left,
Light from the dance, though now of motion reft !
—The agony is over,—and she raised
Her feeble head, and round her faintly gazed :
She saw, she leant upon LEONI's breast,
Murmur'd his name, and sank as if to rest.
“ EDITH, sweet EDITH, speak to me again ! ”
Thou fond one — even thou must ask in vain :
Ay, kiss those lips, and fancy they have breath,
Till they chill even thee : — they're damp with death.

XI.

The night is over, — night which seem'd to be
Endless, O lost AMENAÏDE ! to thee :

Yet what has daylight brought? — a haunting dread.

Hark! the hall echoes to a stranger's tread —

It is the Count AREZZI: — “ My fair child,

How now! — thy cheek is wan, thine eyes are wild.

Ah, well, the rose is brightening on thy cheek:

I was too hasty with my sudden break

Upon thy solitude; scarce may I tell

The crime and horror which last night befell.

I have no time. The Count LEONI's bride —

You saw her — by some sudden poison died;

And strange suspicions on her husband fall:

There were so many present who recall

He gave her the sherbet: — 'twas not all drain'd;

Part of the venom in the cup remain'd.

Some say 'twas jealousy: — I'm on my way

To the tribunal that will sit to-day.

—AMENAÏDE, dear, thou art very pale :
I would I had not told thee of this tale.—
Ha ! 'tis the summons of the council bell.—
I loathe my task,—sweet, hastily farewell.”
She strove to speak,—to only wave her hand,—
To rise,—her trembling limbs refused to stand :
She sought her cross, she strove to think a prayer,—
She gasp'd for breath,—no ruby cross is there ;
But full in view the fatal bracelet shone :
“ LEONI, this is what my love has done ;
I who would willingly have died for thee, —
The fiend has triumph'd in my misery.
I'll rush before the judges,—is there time ? —
But no, I cannot bear to own the crime !
And there is nought of proof,—there can be none,—
And then his known love for that happier one ;—

His noble house,—his brave and stainless name :—
He must escape his doom,—and I my shame.”

Long hours past by, she stirr'd not from her place,
A very statue, with that cold set face,
Save that red flushes came at each light sound,
While the wild eyes glanced fearfully around ;
But still she moved not, spoke not, — such distress
Seeks no distraction from its wretchedness.
There rose loud voices in the outer hall : —
She nerves her with despair, she will know all :
Her ear, acute with agony, can hear
A name at once so dreaded and so dear : —
“ Yes, Lady, he is guilty ! — ” but no more : —
They raise her senseless from the marble floor.
Long did it last, that stony trance like death ;
She roused, but scarce it seem'd with mortal breath.

She show'd no weakness, rose from off the bed ;
Distinct, though low and few, the words she said.
She took a scroll and wrote, — the phrase was brief ;
But a life's sorrow was upon that leaf.
“ To Count AREZZI this, with all thy speed ;
And here, my page, is gold for present need.
Now all away, — my spirit is opprest : ”
She flung her on the couch as if for rest :
They deem'd she slept : — at length her maidens came
To ask her will, to light the lamps' sweet flame : —
Where is the Countess ? why, the couch is bare. —
They search the halls in vain, — she is not there.

XII.

“ Gold, oh ! take double, so my prayer I win.”
When hath such offer fail'd ? — She enter'd in :

Heavily iron chain and barrier fell,
Ere she could reach the prisoner's midnight cell.
They grated on her very heart. At last
She saw LEONI in his misery cast
Abject upon the ground : — not her strange tread
Brought aught to make him raise his bow'd down
head.

She gazed upon him : — has it come to this,
Her passionate love, her youth's long dream of bliss ?
She felt her frame convulsed, her pulse grow weak :

“ LEONI, O LEONI ! hear me speak.”

He started at her voice : — “ AMENAÏDE !

I did not merit this from thee indeed ;

And yet thy name was heavy on my heart :

I pray thee pardon me before we part.”

He sought to take her hand ; but back she flung
The shrowding mantle that around her clung.
“ Ah ! start you at my livid lip and brow ?
You are familiar with such signs ere now !
O for a few short words ! I’ve own’d the whole :
Ere this the Count AREZZI has my scroll. —
The darkness gathers on my failing eye, —
LEONI, let me gaze on thee and die !
O God, unloose this bracelet’s fiery clasp ! ” —
Her spirit pass’d in that convulsive gasp.
The struggle ’s o’er, — that wild heart does not beat ;
She lies a ghastly corpse before his feet.

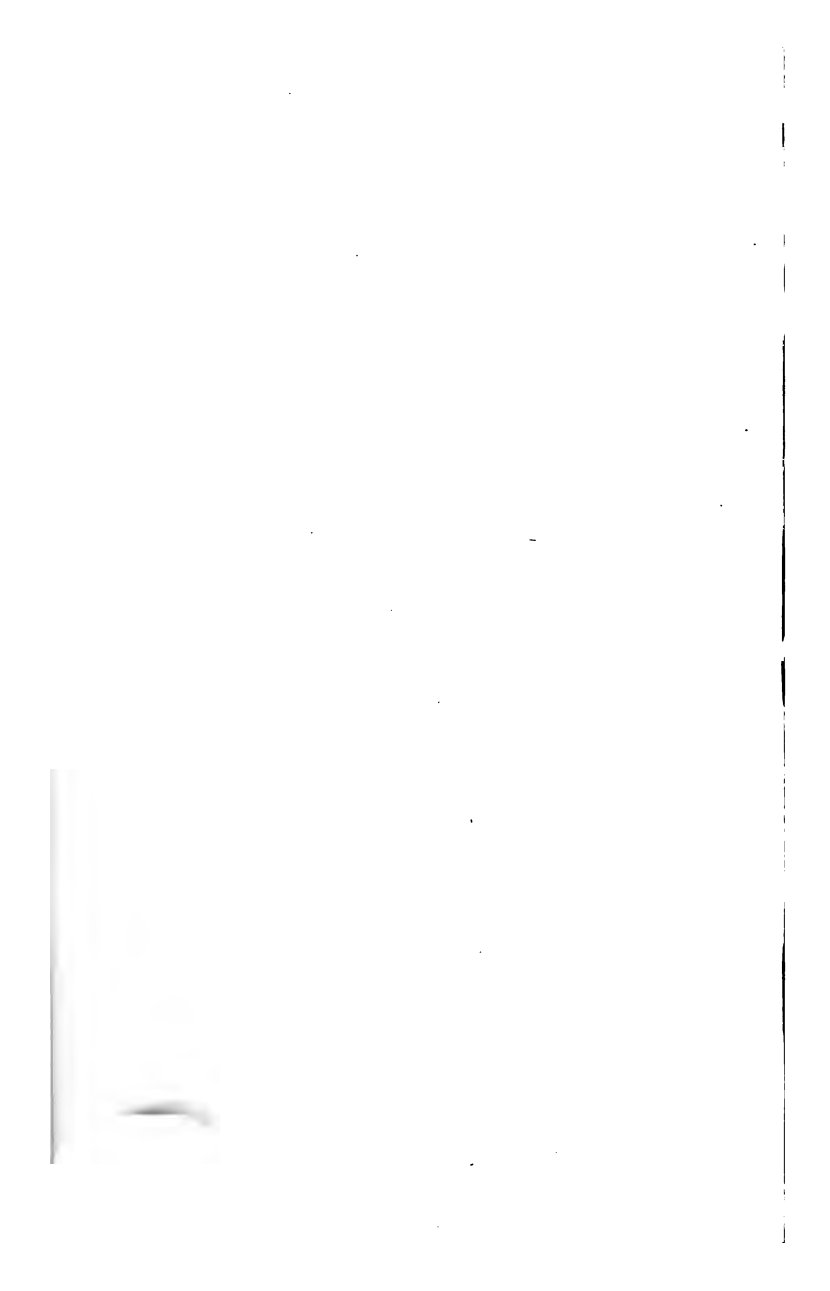
XIII.

They show the traveller still a lonely tomb,
Hid in the darkness of a cloister’s gloom ;

As scarcely worthy of such holy ground,
No other monument is near it found.
A figure closely veil'd bends o'er the stone,
Only the arm with its strange bracelet shown —
A serpent twining round: beneath are graved
A few brief words, that passing pity craved —
“ Pray for the wounded heart, the sinful deed ;”
And, half effaced, a name — “ AMENAÏDE.”

THE LOST PLEIAD.

A story from the stars ; or rather one
Of starry fable from the olden time,
When young Imagination was as fresh
As the fair world it peopled with itself.
The Poet's spirit does so love to link
Its feelings, thoughts, with nature's loveliness :
And hence the twilight grove, the lonely spring,
The ocean-caves, the distant planets, all
Were fill'd with radiant creatures ; and the heart
Became interpreter, and language made
From its own warm sad sympathies, for those
Of whom the dream was beauty.



THE
LOST PLEIAD.

HE was weary of flinging the feather'd reed,
He was weary of curbing his raven steed ;
He heard the gay din from the palace hall,
But he was not in mood for the festival.
There was that crimson, the last on the sky,
Blushes that fade in the moon's cold eye ;
The sigh of the flowers arose sweet on the air,
For the breath of the twilight was wandering there.

He look'd to the west, and the tranquil main
Was branch'd with many a life-like vein ;
Hues of the rosebud the clouds had cast,
Like a cheek on its mirror in gliding past.
It tempted him forth, — to the lulling gale
Prince CYRIS has open'd his silken sail,
And the little boat went over the sea
Like foam, for it was of ivorie,
And carved and shaped like a wreathed shell,
And it was lined with the rose as well ;
For the couch was made of those plumes that fling
The one warm tint neath the wood-dove's wing.
O'er the purple sail the golden flowers run,
For it was wrought for a monarch's son ;
And as it past on, the air was fill'd
With odours, for only waters distill'd

From clove, and sandal, and cinnamon,
E'er wash'd that boat when its task was done :
'Twas left in the care of maidens three,
Lovely they were as maidens should be ;
And in the soft airs that around it flew,
Perhaps their own breath left a perfume too.
— There lay Prince CYRIS, and his mood
Made harmony with the solitude.
— Oh pleasant is it for the heart
To gather up itself apart ;
To think its own thoughts, and to be
Free, as none ever yet were free,
When, prisoners to their gilded thrall,
Vain crowd meets crowd in lighted hall ;
With frozen feelings, tutor'd eye,
And smile which is itself a lie.

— Oh, but for lonely hours like these,
Would every finer current freeze ;
Those kindlier impulses that glow,
Those clear and diamond streams that flow
Only in crystal, while their birth
Is all unsoil'd with stain of earth.
Ever the Lover hath gainsay'd
The creed his once religion made, —
That pure, that high, that holy creed,
Without which love is vain indeed ;
While that which was a veiled shrine,
Whose faith was only not divine,
Becomes a vague, forgotten dream, —
A thing of scorn — an idle theme.
Denied, degraded, and repress,
Love dies beneath the heartless jest.

Oh vain ! for not with such can be
One trace of his divinity.
Ever from poet's lute hath flown
The sweetness 'of its early tone,
When from its wild flight it hath bow'd,
To seek for homage mid the crowd ;
Be the one wonder of the night,
As if the soul could be a sight ;
As all his burning numbers speak
Were written upon brow and cheek ;
And he forsooth must learn its part,
Must choose his words, and school his heart
To one set mould, and pay again
Flattery with flattery as vain ;
Till, mixing with the throng too much,
The cold, the vain, he feels as such ;

Then marvels that his silent lute
Beneath that worldly hand is mute.
— Away ! these scenes are not for thee :
Go dream beneath some lonely tree ;
Away to some far woodland spring,
Dash down thy tinsel crown, and wring
The scented unguents from thine hair :
If thou dost hope that crown to share
The laurell'd bards immortal wear ;
Muse thou o'er leaf and drooping flower,
Wander at evening's haunted hour ;
Listen the stockdove's plaining song
Until it bear thy soul along ;
Then call upon thy freed lute's strain,
And it will answer thee again.

Oh mine own song, did I not hold
Such faith as held the bards of old, —
That one eternal hope of fame
Which sanctifies the poet's name, —
I 'd break my lyre in high disdain,
And hold my gift of song as vain
As those forced flowers which only bloom
One hot night for a banquet room.
— But I have wander'd from my tale, —
The ivory bark, the purple sail,
That bore Prince CYRIS o'er the sea, —
Content with that slow ebb to be
Danced on the wave. By nightfall shaded,
The red lights from the clouds are faded;
Leaving one palest amber line
To mark the last of day's decline;

And all o'er heaven is that clear blue
The stars so love to wander through.
They 're rising from the silent deep,
Like bright eyes opening after sleep.
Young CYRIS watch'd them till their ray
Grew sad — so far they were away.
He felt so earthly, thus to see
What he might never hope to be.
He thought upon earth's loveliest eyes :

What were they to those shining there ?

He thought upon earth's sweetest sighs :

What were they to the lulling air ?

“ Oh no, my heart,” he mournful sigh'd,

“ To thee is that dear boon denied ;

That wildering dream whose fair deceit

Makes languid earth a temple meet

For light, such light as dwells above, —
I have no faith in thee, false love !
I've knelt at many a beauteous shrine,
And call'd, but thought them not, divine.
I've dived in many a beating heart,
But search'd them only to depart ;
For selfish care, or heartless pride,
Were all they ever had to hide.
I'm weary, weary : — one by one,
The life charms of my youth are gone.
I had a dream of stirring fame —
It was a promise, and a name,
Thrice glorious, shining from afar,
But nearer earth had touch'd the star ;
With toil and trouble won from many,
Yet trembling on the breath of any.

The bard, the warrior, and the sage,
What win they but one lying page,
Where deeds and words, at hazard thrown,
May be or may not be their own ?
And pleasure, lighted halls, red wine,
Bright smiles, gay words, have all been mine :
They only left what haunts me now, —
A wasted heart, a weary brow.
Ye distant stars, so calm, so bright,
Would I had portion in your light,
Could read the secrets of your birth, —
Aught, any thing but this dull earth ! ”
— It was not long, ere, still and deep,
Those restless eyes were closed in sleep.
There lay he like a statue pale,
His canopy that silken sail.

There lay he as Endymion slept
When Dian came to him, and wept
Beside the sleep she might not break.
Love, thus we sorrow for thy sake.
There lay he : — well might CYRIS seem
The being of a poet's dream.

Ay, beautiful as a star in the sky,
When the clouds are gloom, and the storm is high,
But still in defiance keeps shining on,
Till the shades are past, and the wind is done.
His hair was gold, like the pheasant's wing,
And curl'd like the hyacinth flower in spring ;
And his eye was that blue so clear, so dark,
Like the falcon's when flying his highest mark.
And telling a tale of gallant war,
On his brow was a slight but glorious scar.

His voice had that low and lute-like sound,
Whose echo within the heart is found.
His very faults were those that win
Too dazzling and ready an entrance in.
Daring, and fiery, wild to range,
Reckless of what might ensue from the change ;
Too eager for pleasures to fill up the void,
Till the very impatience their nature destroy'd ;
Restless, inconstant, he sought to possess, —
The danger was dared, and the charm grew less.
But, oh ! these were only youth's meteor fires,
The ignis blaze that with youth expires.

No never ! — the heart should child-like be train'd,
And its wilful waywardness somewhat enchain'd.
— Was it the spell of morning dew
That o'er his lids its influence threw,

Clearing those earthly mists away,
That erst like veils before them lay?
Whether fair dream, or actual sight,
It was a vision of delight;
For free to his charm'd eyes were given
The spirits of the starry heaven.
It was that hour, when each faint dye
Of rose upon the morning's cheek
Warns the bright watchers of the sky
Their other ocean home to seek.
He saw the Archer with his bow
Guide now his radiant car below;
He saw the shining Serpent fold
Beneath the wave his scales of gold.
—But, of all the pageants nigh,
Only one fix'd CYRIS' eye:

Borne by music on their way,
Every chord a living ray,
Sinking on a song-like breeze,
The lyre of the Pleiades,
With its seven fair sisters bent
O'er their starry instrument;
Each a star upon her brow,
Somewhat dim in daylight's glow,
That clasp'd the flashing coronet
On their midnight tresses set.
— All were young, all very fair —
But one — oh ! CYRIS gazed but there.
Each other lip wore sterner mould, —
Fair, but so proud, — bright, but so cold;
And clear pale cheek, and radiant eye,
Wore neither blush, nor smile, nor sigh,
Those sweet signs of humanity.

But o'er CYRENE's cheek the rose,
Like moon-touch'd water, ebbs and flows ;
And eyes that droop like Summer flowers
Told they could change with shine and showers.

—The starry lyre has reach'd the sea, —

Started young CYRIS to his knee :

Surely her dark eyes met his own ;

But, ah ! the lovely dream is flown.

—I need not tell how long the day

Pass'd in its weariness away ;

I need not say how CYRIS' sight

Pined for the darkness of the night.

But darkness came, and with it brought

The vision which the watcher sought.

He saw the starry lyre arise —

The seven fair sisters' glittering car —

Till, lost amid the distant skies,

Each only look'd a burning star.

Again, at morning's dewy hour,

He saw them seek their ocean bow'r ;

Again those dark eyes met his own —

Again the lovely dream is flown.

—Night after night thus pass'd ; but now

The young Moon wears less vestal brow.

Her silver veil is lined with gold ;

Like a crown'd queen, she comes to hold

Her empire in the sky alone —

No rival near her midnight throne.

Sometimes he fancied o'er the tide

He saw pale phantoms dimly glide :

The moonbeams fell o'er sea and sky,

No other light met CYRIS' eye.

The night — the morn — he watch'd in vain,

No starry lyre rose from the main.

— And who were they the lovely seven,

With shape of earth, and home in heaven?

Daughters of King Atlas they —

He of the enchanted sway ;

He who read the mystic lines

Of the planets' wondrous signs ;

He the sovereign of the air —

They were his, these daughters fair.

Six were brides, in sky and sea,

To some crown'd divinity ;

But his youngest, loveliest one,

Was as yet unwoo'd, unwon.

She's kneeling at her father's side :—

What the boon could be denied

To that fair but tear-wash'd cheek,
That look'd so earnest, yet so meek ;
To that mouth whose gentle words
Murmur like the wind-lute's chords ;
To that soft and pleading eye
Who is there could suit deny ?
Bent the king, with look of care,
O'er the dear one kneeling there ;
Bent and kiss'd his pleading one, —
Ah, that smile ! her suit is won.
— It was a little fountain made
A perfect sanctuary of shade ;
The pine boughs like a roof, beneath
The tapestry of the acacia wreath.
The air was haunted, sounds, and sighs,
The falling waters' melodies ;

The breath of flowers, the faint perfume
Of the green pineleaf's early bloom ;
And murmurs from the music hung
Ever the woodland boughs among ;
His couch of moss, his pillow flowers,
Dreaming away the listless hours —
Those dreams so vague, those dreams so vain,
Yet iron links in lover's chain —
Prince CYRIS leant : the solitude
Suited such visionary mood ;
For love hath delicate delights, —
The silence of the summer nights ;
The leaves and buds, whose languid sighs
Seem like the echo of his own ;
The wind which like a lute note dies ;
The shadow by the branches thrown,

Although a sweet uncertain smile
Wanders through those boughs the while,
As if the young Moon liked to know
Her fountain mirror bright below ;
Linking his thoughts with all of these,
For love is full of fantasies.
— Why starts young CYRIS from his dream ?
There is a shadow on the stream,
There is an odour on the air ; —
What shape of beauty fronts him there !
He knows her by her clear dark eye,
Touch'd with the light that rules the sky ;
The star upon her forehead set,
Her wild hair's sparkling coronet ;
Her white arms, and her silvery vest, —
The lovely Pleiad stands confest.

— I cannot sing as I have sung ;
My heart is changed, my lute unstrung.
Once said I that my early chords
Were vow'd to love or sorrow's words :
But love has like an odour past,
Or echo, all too sweet to last ;
And sorrow now holds lonely sway
O'er my young heart, and lute, and lay.
Be it for those whose unwaked youth
Believes that hope and love are sooth —
The loved, the happy — let them dream
This meeting by the forest stream.
— No more they parted till the night
Call'd on her starry host for light,
And that bright lyre arose on high
With its fair watchers to their sky.

Then came the wanderings long and lonely,
As if the world held them, them only ;
The gather'd flower, which is to bear
Some gentle secret whisper'd there ;
The seat beneath the forest tree ;
 The breathless silence, which to love
Is all that eloquence can be ;
 The looks ten thousand words above ;
The fond deep gaze, till the fix'd eye
Casts each on each a mingled dye ;
The interest round each little word,
Though scarcely said, and scarcely heard.
Little love asks of language aid,
For never yet hath vow been made
In that young hour when love is new ;
He feels at first so deep, so true,

A promise is a useless token,
When neither dream it can be broken.
Alas ! vows are his after sign ! —
We prop the tree in its decline —
The ghosts that haunt a parting hour,
With all of grief, and nought of power ;
A chain half sunder'd in the making, —
The plighted vow 's already breaking.
From such dreams all too soon we wake ;
For like the moonlight on the lake,
One passing cloud, one waving bough —
The silver light, what is it now ?
— Said I not, that young prince was one
Who wearied when the goal was won ;
To whom the charm of change was all
That bound his heart in woman's thrall ?

And she now lingering at his side,
His bright, his half-immortal bride,
Though she had come with him to die,
Share earthly tear, and earthly sigh ;
Left for his sake her glorious sphere, —
What matter'd that ? — she now was here.
— At first 't was like a frightful dream :
Why should such such terror even seem ?
Again — again — it cannot be !
Woe for such wasting misery ! —
This watching love's o'erclouding sky,
 Though still believing it must clear ;
This closing of the trusting eye ;
 The hope that darkens into fear ;
The lingering change of doubt and dread ;
All in the one dear presence fled.

Till days of anguish past alone,
Till careless look, and alter'd tone,
Relieve us from the rack, to know
Our last of fate, our worst of woe.
— And she, the guileless, pure, and bright,
Whose nature was her morning's light ;
Who deem'd of love as it is given
The sunniest element to heaven ;
Whose sweet belief in it was caught
Only from what her own heart taught —
Her woman's heart, that dreamy shrine,
Of what itself made half divine —
CYRENE, when thy shadow came
 With thy first step that touch'd the earth,
It was an omen how the same
 Doth sorrow haunt all mortal birth.

Thou hast but left those starry spheres
For woman's destiny of tears.

— They parted as all lovers part, —
She with her wrong'd and breaking heart;
But he, rejoicing he is free,

Bounds like the captive from his chain,
And wilfully believing she

Hath found her liberty again:
Or if dark thoughts will cross his mind,
They are but clouds before the wind.
— Thou false one, go ! — but deep and dread
Be minstrel curse upon thy head !
— Go, be the first in battle line,
Where banners sweep, and falchions shine ;
Go thou to lighted festival,
Be there the peerless one of all ;

Let bright cheeks wear yet brighter rays
If they can catch Prince CYRIS' gaze;
Be thine in all that honour'd name,
Men hold to emulate is fame ;
Yet not the less my curse shall rest,
A serpent coiling in thy breast.
Weariness, like a weed, shall spring
Wherever is thy wandering.
Thy heart a lonely shrine shall be,
Guarded by no divinity.
Thou shalt be lonely, and shalt know
It is thyself has made thee so.
Thou hast been faithless, and shalt dread
Deceit in aught of fondness said.
Go, with the doom thou 'st made thine own !
Go, false one ! to thy grave — alone. —

— 'Twas the red hue of twilight's hour
That lighted up the forest bower ;
Where that sad Pleiad look'd her last.
The white wave of his plume is past ;
She raised her listening head in vain,
To catch his echoing step again ;
Then bow'd her face upon her hand,
 And once or twice a burning tear
Wander'd beyond their white command,
 And mingled with the waters clear.
'Tis said that ever from that day
Those waters caught their diamond ray.
— The evening shades closed o'er the sky,
The night winds sang their melody :
They seem'd to rouse her from the dream
That chain'd her by that lonely stream.

She came when first the starry lyre
Tinged the green wave with kindling fire ;
“ Come, sister,” sang they, “ to thy place :”
The Pleiad gazed, then hid her face.
Slowly that lyre rose while they sung, —
Alas ! there is one chord unstrung.
It rose, until CYRENE’S ear
No longer could its music hear.
She sought the fountain, and flung there
The crown that bound her raven hair ;
The starry crown, the sparkles died,
Darkening within its fated tide.
She sinks by that lone wave : — ’tis past ;
There the lost Pleiad breathed her last.
No mortal hand e’er made her grave ;
But one pale rose was seen to wave,

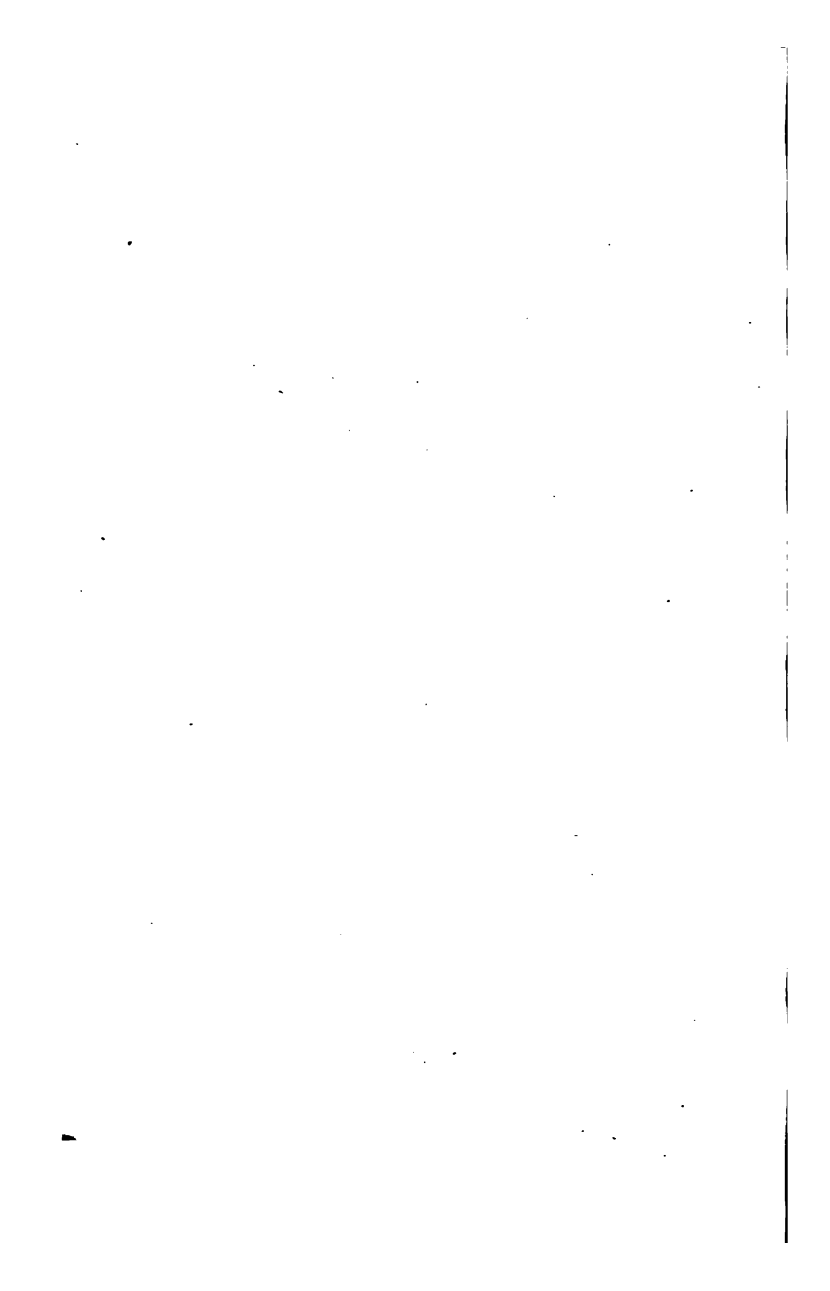
Guarding a sudden growth of flowers,
Not like those sprung in summer hours,
But pale and drooping ; each appears
As if their only dew were tears.

On that sky lyre a chord is mute :

Haply one echo yet remains,
To linger on the poet's lute,

And tell in his most mournful strains,
— A star hath left its native sky,
To touch our cold earth, and to die ;
To warn the young heart how it trust
To mortal vows, whose faith is dust ;
To bid the young cheek guard its bloom
From wasting by such early doom ;
Warn by the histories link'd with all
That ever bow'd to passion's thrall ;

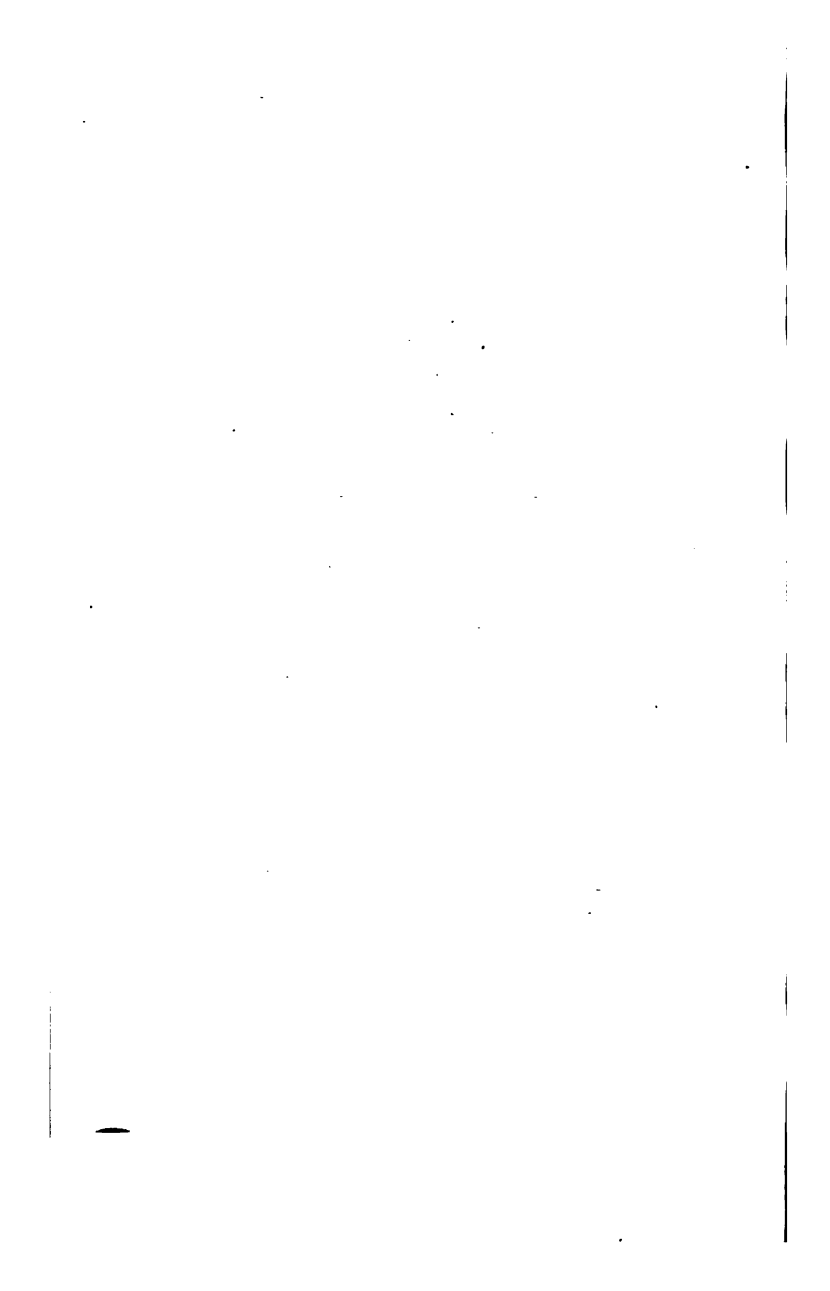
Warn by all — above — below,
By that lost Pleiad's depth of woe, —
Warn them, Love is of heavenly birth,
But turns to death on touching earth.



A

HISTORY OF THE LYRE.

Sketches indeed, from that most passionate page,
A woman's heart, of feelings, thoughts, that make
The atmosphere in which her spirit moves ;
But, like all other earthly elements,
O'ercast with clouds, now dark, now touch'd with light,
With rainbows, sunshine, showers, moonlight, stars,
Chasing each other's change. I fain would trace
Its brightness and its blackness ; and these lines
Are consecrate to annals such as those,
That count the pulses of the beating heart.



A

HISTORY OF THE LYRE.

'Tis strange how much is mark'd on memory,
In which we may have interest, but no part;
How circumstance will bring together links
In destinies the most dissimilar.

This face, whose rudely-pencill'd sketch you hold,
Recalls to me a host of pleasant thoughts,
And some more serious. — This is EULALIE,
Once the delight of Rome for that fine skill

With which she woke the lute when answering
With its sweet echoes her melodious words.
She had the rich perfection of that gift,
Her Italy's own ready song, which seems
The poetry caught from a thousand flowers;
The diamond sunshine, and the lulling air,
So pure, yet full of perfume; fountains tuned
Like natural lutes, from whispering green leaves;
The low peculiar murmur of the pines:
From pictured saints, that look their native heaven—
Statues whose grace is a familiar thing;
The ruin'd shrine of mournful loveliness;
The stately church, awfully beautiful;
Their climate, and their language, whose least word
Is melody — these overflow the heart
Till, fountain-like, the lips o'erflow with song,

And music is to them an element.

— I saw EULALIA : all was in the scene
Graceful association, slight surprise,
That are so much in youth. It was in June,
Night, but such night as only is not day, —
For moonlight, even when most clear, is sad :
We cannot but contrast its still repose
With the unceasing turmoil in ourselves.

— We stood beside a cypress, whose green spire
Rose like a funeral column o'er the dead.
Near was a fallen palace — stain'd and gray
The marble show'd amid the tender leaves
Of ivy but just shooting ; yet there stood
Pillars unbroken, two or three vast halls,
Entire enough to cast a deep black shade ;
And a few statues, beautiful but cold, —

White shadows, pale and motionless, that seem
To mock the change in which they had no part, —
Fit images of the dead. Pensive enough,
Whatever aspect desolation wears ;
But this, the wrecking work of yesterday,
Hath somewhat still more touching ; here we trace
The waste of man too much. When years have past
Over the fallen arch, the ruin'd hall,
It seems but course of time, the one great doom,
Whose influence is alike upon us all ;
The gray tints soften, and the ivy wreath
And wild flowers breathe life's freshness round : but
here

We stand before decay ; scarce have the walls
Lost music left by human step and voice ;
The lonely hearth, the household desolate,

Some noble race gone to the dust in blood ;
Man shames of his own deeds, and there we gaze,
Watching the progress not of time, but death.

— Low music floated on the midnight wind,
A mournful murmur, such as opes the heart
With memory's key, recalling other times,
And gone by hopes and feelings, till they have
An echo sorrowful, but very sweet.

“ Hush !” said my comrade, — “ it is EULALIE ;

“ Now you may gaze upon the loneliness

“ Which is her inspiration.” Soft we pass'd

Behind a fragment of the shadowy wall.

— I never saw more perfect loveliness.

It ask'd, it had no aid from dress : her robe
Was white, and simply gather'd in such folds
As suit a statue : neck and arms were bare ;

The black hair was unbound, and like a veil
Hung even to her feet ; she held a lute,
And, as she paced the ancient gallery, waked
A few wild chords, and murmur'd low sweet words,
But scarcely audible, as if she thought
Rather than spoke : — the night, the solitude,
Fill'd the young Pythoness with poetry.
— Her eyes were like the moonlight, clear and soft,
That shadowy brightness which is born of tears,
And raised towards the sky, as if they sought
Companionship with their own heaven ; her cheek, —
Emotion made it colourless, that pure
And delicate white which speaks so much of thought,
Yet flushes in a moment into rose ;
And tears like pearls lay on it, those which come
When the heart wants a language ; but she pass'd,

And left the place to me a haunted shrine,
Hallow'd by genius in its holiest mood.
— At Count ZARIN'S pallazzo the next night
We were to meet, and expectation wore
Itself with fancies, — all of them were vain.
I could not image aught so wholly changed.
Her robe was Indian red, and work'd with gold,
And gold the queen-like girdle round her waist.
Her hair was gather'd up in grape-like curls;
An emerald wreath, shaped into vine leaves, made
Its graceful coronal. Leant on a couch
The centre of a group, whose converse light
Made a fit element, in which her wit
Flash'd like the lightning: — on her cheek the rose
Burnt like a festal lamp; the sunniest smiles
Wander'd upon her face. — I only knew

EULALIA by her touching voice again.

— They had been praying her to wake the lute :
She would not, wayward in her mood that night ;
When some one bade her mark a little sketch
I brought from England of my father's hall ;
Himself was outlined leaning by an oak,
A greyhound at his feet. “ And is this dog
Your father's sole companion ? ” — with these words
She touch'd the strings : — that melancholy song,
I never may forget its sweet reproach.

— She ask'd me how I had the heart to leave
The old man in his age ; she told how lorn
Is solitude ; she spoke of the young heart
Left in its loneliness, where it had known
No kindness but from strangers, forced to be
Wayfarer in this bleak and bitter world,

And looking to the grave as to a home.

— The numbers died in tears, but no one sought
To stay her as she pass'd with veiled face
From the hush'd hall. — One gently whisper'd me,
EULALIA is an orphan ! * * *

Yet still our meetings were mid festival,
Night after night. It was both sad and strange,
To see that fine mind waste itself away,
Too like some noble stream, which, unconfined,
Makes fertile its rich banks, and glads the face
Of nature round ; but not so when its wave
Is lost in artificial waterfalls,
And sparkling eddies ; or coop'd up to make
The useless fountain of a palace hall.
— One day I spoke of this ; her eager soul
Was in its most unearthly element.

We had been speaking of the immortal dead.
The light flash'd in her eyes. "'Tis this which makes
The best assurance of our promised heaven :
This triumph intellect has over death —
Our words yet live on others' lips ; our thoughts
Actuate others. Can that man be dead
Whose spiritual influence is upon his kind ?
He lives in glory ; and such speaking dust
Has more of life than half its breathing moulds.
Welcome a grave with memories such as these,
Making the sunshine of our moral world !"
" This proud reward you see, and yet can leave :
Your songs sink on the ear, and there they die,
A flower's sweetness, but a flower's life.
An evening's homage is your only fame ;

'Tis vanity, EULALIA." — Mournfully
She shook the raven tresses from her brow,
As if she felt their darkness omen-like.
" Speak not of this to me, nor bid me think ;
It is such pain to dwell upon myself ;
And know how different I am from all
I once dream'd I could be. Fame ! stirring fame !
I work no longer miracles for thee.
I am as one who sought at early dawn
To climb with fiery speed some lofty hill :
His feet are strong in eagerness and youth ;
His limbs are braced by the fresh morning air,
And all seems possible : — this cannot last.
The way grows steeper, obstacles arise,
And unkind thwartings from companions near.
The height is truer measured, having traced

Part of its heavy length ; his sweet hopes droop.
Like prison'd birds that know their cage has bars,
The body wearies, and the mind is worn —
That worst of lassitude : — hot noon comes on ;
There is no freshness in the sultry air,
There is no rest upon the toilsome road ;
There is the summit, which he may not reach,
And round him are a thousand obstacles.

“ I am a woman : — tell me not of fame.

The eagle's wing may sweep the stormy path,
And fling back arrows, where the dove would die.
Look on those flowers near yon acacia tree —
The lily of the valley — mark how pure
The snowy blossoms, — and how soft a breath
Is almost hidden by the large dark leaves.
Not only have those delicate flowers a gift

Of sweetness and of beauty, but the root —
A healing power dwells there ; fragrant and fair,
But dwelling still in some beloved shade.
Is not this woman's emblem ? — she whose smile
Should only make the loveliness of home —
Who seeks support and shelter from man's heart,
And pays it with affection quiet, deep, —
And in his sickness — sorrow — with an aid
He did not deem in aught so fragile dwelt.
Alas ! this has not been my destiny.
Again I'll borrow Summer's eloquence.
Yon Eastern tulip — that is emblem mine ;
Ay ! it has radiant colours — every leaf
Is as a gem from its own country's mines.
'Tis redolent with sunshine ; but with noon
It has begun to wither : — look within,

It has a wasted bloom, a burning heart ;
It has dwelt too much in the open day,
And so have I ; and both must droop and die !
I did not choose my gift : — too soon my heart,
Watch-like, had pointed to a later hour
Than time had reach'd : and as my years pass'd on,
Shadows and floating visions grew to thoughts,
And thoughts found words, the passionate words
 of song,
And all to me was poetry. The face,
Whose radiance glided past me in the dance,
Awoke a thousand fantasies to make
Some history of her passing smile or sigh.
The flowers were full of song : — upon the rose
I read the crimson annals of true love ;
The violet flung me back on old romance ;

All was association with some link
Whose fine electric throb was in the mind.
I paid my price for this — 'twas happiness.
My wings have melted in their eager flight,
And gleams of heaven have only made me feel
Its distance from our earth more forcibly.
My feelings grow less fresh, my thoughts less kind :
My youth has been too lonely, too much left
To struggle for itself ; and this world is
A northern clime, where ev'ry thing is chill'd.
I speak of my own feelings — I can judge
Of others but by outward show, and that
Is falser than the actor's studied part.
We dress our words and looks in borrow'd robes :
The mind is as the face — for who goes forth
In public walks without a veil at least ?

'Tis this constraint makes half life's misery.
'Tis a false rule : we do too much regard
Others' opinions, but neglect their feelings ;
Thrice happy if such order were reversed.
Oh why do we make sorrow for ourselves,
And, not content with the great wretchedness
Which is our native heritage — those ills
We have no mastery over — sickness, toil,
Death, and the natural grief which comrades death —
Are not all these enough, that we must add
Mutual and moral torment, and inflict
Ingenious tortures we must first contrive ?
I am distrustful — I have been deceived
And disappointed — I have hoped in vain.
I am vain — praise is opium, and the lip
Cannot resist the fascinating draught,

Though knowing its excitement is a fraud —
Delirious — a mockery of fame.
I may not image the deep solitude
In which my spirit dwells. My days are past
Among the cold, the careless, and the false.
What part have I in them. or they in me?
Yet I would be beloved; I would be kind;
I would share others' sorrows, others' joys;
I would fence in a happiness with friends.
I cannot do this: — is the fault mine own?
Can I love those who but repay my love
With half caprice, half flattery; or trust,
When I have full internal consciousness
They are deceiving me? I may be kind,
And meet with kindness, yet be lonely still;
For gratitude is not companionship. —

We have proud words that speak of intellect ;
We talk of mind that magnifies the world,
And makes it glorious : much of this is true, —
All time attests the miracles of man :
The very elements, whose nature seems
To mock dominion, yet have worn his yoke.
His way has been upon the pathless sea ;
The earth's dark bosom search'd ; bodiless air
Works as his servant ; and from his own mind
What rich stores he has won, the sage, the bard,
The painter, these have made their nature proud :
And yet how life goes on, its great outline
How noble and ennobling ! — but within
How mean, how poor, how pitiful, how mix'd
With base alloy ; how Disappointment tracks
The steps of Hope ; how Envy dogs success ;

How every victor's crown is lined with thorns,
And worn mid scoffs ! Trace the young poet's fate :
Fresh from his solitude, the child of dreams,
His heart upon his lips, he seeks the world,
To find him fame and fortune, as if life
Were like a fairy tale. His song has led
The way before him ; flatteries fill his ear,
His presence courted, and his words are caught ;
And he seems happy in so many friends.
What marvel if he somewhat overrate
His talents and his state ? These scenes soon change.
The vain, who sought to mix their name with his ;
The curious, who but live for some new sight ;
The idle, — all these have been gratified,
And now neglect stings even more than scorn.
Envy has spoken, felt more bitterly,

For that it was not dream'd of; worldliness
Has crept upon his spirit unaware;
Vanity craves for its accustom'd food;
He has turn'd sceptic to the truth which made
His feelings poetry; and discontent
Hangs heavily on the lute, which wakes no more
Its early music: — social life is fill'd
With doubts and vain aspirings; solitude,
When the imagination is dethroned,
Is turn'd to weariness. What can he do
But hang his lute on some lone tree, and die?

“Methinks we must have known some former state
More glorious than our present, and the heart
Is haunted with dim memories, shadows left
By past magnificence; and hence we pine
With vain aspirings, hopes that fill the eyes

With bitter tears for their own vanity.
Remembrance makes the poet ; 'tis the past
Lingering within him, with a keener sense
Than is upon the thoughts of common men
Of what has been, that fills the actual world
With unreal likenesses of lovely shapes,
That were and are not ; and the fairer they,
The more their contrast with existing things,
The more his power, the greater is his grief.
— Are we then fallen from some noble star,
Whose consciousness is as an unknown curse,
And we feel capable of happiness
Only to know it is not of our sphere ?

“ I have sung passionate songs of beating hearts ;
Perhaps it had been better they had drawn
Their inspiration from an inward source.

Had I known even an unhappy love,
It would have flung an interest round life
Mine never knew. This is an empty wish ;
Our feelings are not fires to light at will
Our nature's fine and subtle mysteries ;
We may control them, but may not create,
And love less than its fellows. I have fed
Perhaps too much upon the lotos fruits
Imagination yields, — fruits which unfit
The palate for the more substantial food
Of our own land — reality. I made
My heart too like a temple for a home ;
My thoughts were birds of paradise, that breathed
The airs of heaven, but died on touching earth.
—The knight whose deeds were stainless as his crest,
Who made my name his watchword in the field ;

The poet with immortal words, whose heart
I shared with beauty ; or the patriot,
Whose eloquence was power, who made my smile
His recompense amid the toil which shaped
A nation's destiny : these, such as these,
The glorified — the passionate — the brave —
In these I might have found the head and heart
I could have worshipp'd. Where are such as these ?
— Not mid gay cavaliers, who make the dance
Pleasant with graceful flatteries ; whose words
A passing moment might light up my cheek,
But haunted not my solitude. The fault
Has been my own ; perhaps I ask'd too much : —
Yet let me say, what firmly I believe,
Love can be — ay, and is. I held that Love
Which chooseth from a thousand only one,

To be the object of that tenderness
Natural to every heart ; which can resign
Its own best happiness for one dear sake ;
Can bear with absence ; hath no part in Hope, —
For Hope is somewhat selfish, Love is not, —
And doth prefer another to itself.
Unchangeable and generous, what, like Love,
Can melt away the dross of worldliness ;
Can elevate, refine, and make the heart
Of that pure gold which is the fitting shrine
For fire, as sacred as e'er came from Heaven ?
No more of this : — one word may read my heart,
And that one word is utter weariness !
Yet sometimes I look round with vain regret,
And think I will restrung my lute, and nerve
My woman's hand for nobler enterprise ;

But the day never comes. Alas ! we make
A ladder of our thoughts, where angels step,
But sleep ourselves at the foot : our high resolves
Look down upon our slumbering acts."

I soon left Italy : it is well worth
A year of wandering, were it but to feel
How much our England does outweigh the world.
A clear cold April morning was it, when I first
Rode up the avenue of ancient oaks,
A hundred years upon each stately head.
The park was bright with sunshine, and the deer
Went bounding by ; freshness was on the wind,
Till every nerve was braced ; and once the air
Came with Arabian sweetness on its wing, —
It was the earliest growth of violets.
A fairy foot had left its trace beside, —

Ah, EMILY had nursed my favourite flowers.
Nearer I came, I heard familiar sounds —
They are the heart's best music; saw the blaze
Through the wide windows of the dear old hall.
One moment more, my eager footsteps stood
Within my father's home, beside his hearth.
— Three times those early violets had fill'd
Their urns with April dew, when the changed cheek
Of EMILY wore signs of young decay.
The rose was too inconstant, and the light
Too clear in those blue eyes; but southern skies
Might nurse a flower too delicate to bear
The winds of March, unless in Italy.
I need not tell thee how the soothing air
Brought tranquil bloom that fed not on itself
To EMILY's sweet face; but soon again

We talk'd of winter by our own wood fire,
With cheerful words, that had no tears to hide.
—We pass'd through Rome on our return, and there
Sought out EULALIA. Graceful as her wont
Her welcome to my bride; but oh, so changed!
Her cheek was colourless as snow; she wore
The beauty of a statue, or a spirit
With large and radiant eyes:—her thrilling voice
Had lost its power, but still its sweetness kept.
One night, while seated in her favourite hall,
The silken curtains all flung back for air,
She mark'd my EMILY, whose idle gaze
Was fix'd on that fair garden. “Will you come
And wander in the moonlight?—our soft dew
Will wash no colour from thine island cheek.”
She led the way by many a bed, whose hues

Vied with the rainbow,—through sweet-scented
groves

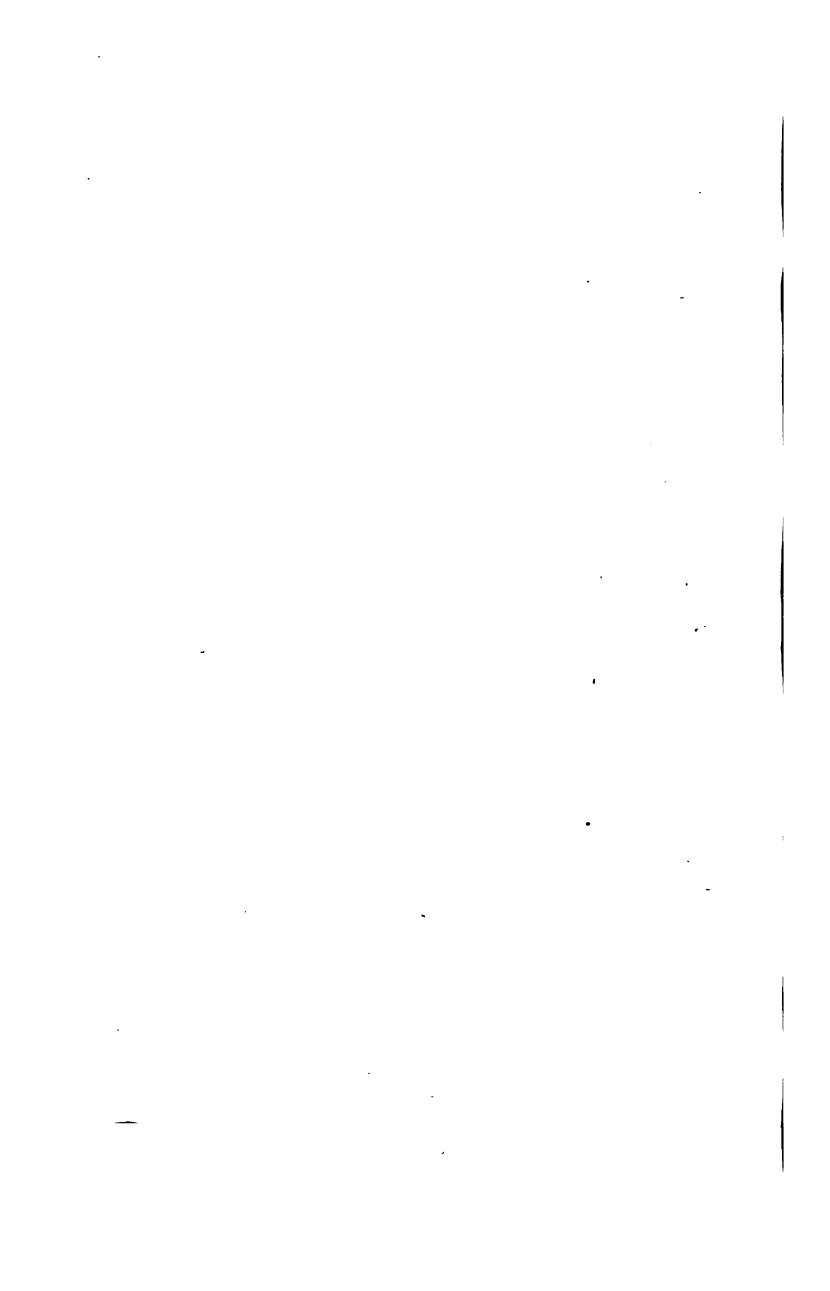
Golden with oranges : at length the path
Grew shadowy with darker, older trees,
And led us to a little lonely spot.

There were no blossoming shrubs, but sweeping pines
Guarded the solitude ; and laurel boughs
Made fitting mirrors for the lovely moon,
With their bright shining leaves ; the ivy lay
And trail'd upon the ground ; and in the midst
A large old cypress stood, beneath whose shade
There was a sculptured form ; the feet were placed
Upon a finely-carved rose wreath ; the arms
Were raised to Heaven, as if to clasp the stars
EULALIA leant beside ; 'twas hard to say
Which was the actual marble : when she spoke,

You started, scarce it seem'd a human sound ;
But the eyes' lustre told life linger'd still ;
And now the moonlight seem'd to fill their depths.
" You see," she said, " my cemetery here : —
Here, only here, shall be my quiet grave.
Yon statue is my emblem : see, its grasp
Is raised to Heaven, forgetful that the while
Its step has crush'd the fairest of earth's flowers
With its neglect." —

Her prophecy was sooth :
No change of leaf had that green valley known,
When EULALIE lay there in her last sleep.

Peace to the weary and the beating heart,
That fed upon itself !



THE
ANCESTRESS,
A DRAMATIC SKETCH.

THE COUNT OF ARDENBURG.

JAROMIR, otherwise COUNT HERMAN, his Nephew.

Guests, Attendants, Officers, &c.

BERTHA, Daughter of the Count.

LEITRA, her Nurse.

Ladies, Attendants, &c.

THE
ANCESTRESS.

SCENE I. — JAROMIR. BERTHA.

BERTHA.

It is in this we differ ; I would seek
To blend my very being into thine—
I'm even jealous of thy memory :
I wish our childhood had been pass'd together.

JAROMIR.

Bertha, sweet Bertha ! would to heav'n it had !
What would'st thou with a past that knew thee not ?

BERTHA.

To make that past my own by confidence,
By mingled recollections, I would fain
Our childish sorrows had been wept together ;
Our childish joys had been indulged together ;
Our childish hopes had been believed together :
But as this cannot be, I speak of them —
The very speaking does associate us —
I speak of them, that, in those coming years,
When youthful hours rise up within the mind,
Like lovely dreams some sudden chance has brought,
To fill the eyes with long-forgotten tears,

My image may be with them as of one
Who held such sympathy with aught of thine:

JAROMIR.

Sweetest, no more of this : my youth hath pass'd
In harsh and rugged warfare, not the scenes
Of young knights with white plumes, and gallant
steeds,
With lady's favour on each burnish'd crest,
Whose tournaments, in honour of fair dames,
May furnish tales to suit the maiden's ear.
I've had no part in such ; I only know
Of war the terrible reality : —
The long night-watch beneath the driving snow : —
The unsoothed pillow, where the strong man lay
Like a weak child, by weary sickness worn

Even to weeping : — or the ghastly dead,
By the more ghastly dying, whose last breath
Pass'd in a prayer for water — but in vain, —
O'er them their eager comrades hurry on
To slaughter others. How thy cheek is blanch'd !
I truly said these were no tales for thee.
Come, take thy lute, and sing just one sweet song
To fill my sleep with music.

BERTHA.

Then good night.

I have so much to say to my old nurse, —
This is her annual visit, and she waits
Within my chamber, — so one only song.
My lute is tuneless with this damp night air.

Like to our own glad spirits, its fine chords
Are soon relax'd.

JAROMIR.

Then sing, love, with the wind,
The plaining wind, and let that be thy lute.

BERTHA.

How wildly round our ancient battlements
The air-notes murmur ! Blent with such a wind
I heard the song which shall be ours to-night.
She had a strange sweet voice, the maid who sang,
But early death was pale upon her cheek ;
And she had melancholy thoughts, that gave
Their sadness to her speech : she sat apart
From all her young companions, in the shade

Of an old tree — a gloomy tree, whose boughs
Hung o'er her as a pall : — 'twas omen-like,
For she died young, — of gradual decay,
As if the heart consumed itself. None knew
If she had loved ; but alway did her song
Dwell on love's sorrows.

Sleep, heart of mine, —
Why should love awake thee ?
Like yon closed rosebud,
To thy rest betake thee.

Sleep, heart of mine, —
Wherefore art thou beating ?
Do dreams stir thy slumbers,
Vainest hopes repeating ?

Sleep, heart of mine,
Sleep thou without dreaming :
Love, the beguiler,
Weareth such false seeming.

Sleep, heart of mine ;
But if on thy slumbers
Breathe one faint murmur
Of his charm'd numbers ;

Waken, heart of mine,
From such dangerous sleeping ;
Love's haunted visions
Ever end in weeping.

But now no more of song. I will not lose
Another legend of my nurse's store.

A whole year must have added to her list
Of ghastly murders, spiritual visitings :
At least, 't will make the ancient ones seem new.

JAROMIR.

And you will listen like a frightened child.
I think I see you ; — when the turret clock
Has toll'd the night hour heavily ; the hearth
Has only flickering embers, which send forth
Gleams of distorting light ; the untrimm'd lamp
Exaggerates the shadows, till they seem
Flung by no human shape ; the hollow voice
Of that old crone, the only living sound ;
Her face, on which mortality has writ
Its closing, with the wan and bony hand,
Raised like a spectre's — and yourself the while,

Cold from the midnight chill, and white with fear,
Your large blue eyes darker and larger grown
With terror's chain'd attention, and your breath
Suppress'd for very earnestness. Well, love,
Good night; and if our haunted air be fill'd
With Spirits, may they watch o'er thee like Love!

BERTHA.

Good night, good night! — the kind Madonna shed
Her blessings o'er thee!

[*Exit* JAROMIR.]

'Tis his last footfall, — I can catch no more.
Methinks he pass'd too quickly. Had I left
This room, I should have counted every step, —
Have linger'd on the threshold; but he went
Rapidly, carelessly. Now out on this,

The very folly of a loving heart !
O Jaromir ! it is a fearful thing
To love as I love thee ; to feel the world —
The bright, the beautiful, joy-giving world —
A blank without thee. Never more to me
Can hope, joy, fear wear different seemings. Now
I have no hope that does not dream for thee ;
I have no joy that is not shared by thee ;
I have no fear that does not dread for thee.
All that I once took pleasure in, — my lute
Is only sweet when it repeats thy name ;
My flowers, I only gather them for thee ;
The book drops listless down, I cannot read,
Unless it is to thee ; my lonely hours
Are spent in shaping forth our future lives
After my own romantic fantasies.

He is the star round which my thoughts revolve
Like satellites. My father, can it be
That thine, the unceasing love of many years,
Doth not so fill my heart as this strange guest?
I loved thee once so wholly, — now methinks
I love thee for that thou lovest Jaromir.
— It is the lamp gone out, — that dreams like these
Should be by darkness broken ! I am grown
So superstitious in my fears and hopes,
As if I thought that all things must take part
In my great love. — Alas, my poor old nurse,
How she has waited !

[*Exit* BERTHA.]

SCENE II. — BERTHA. LEITRA.

BERTHA.

The embers cast a cold dim light around,
And the wan lamp seems weary with our watch. —
O Leitra, do not look so fearfully.

LEITRA.

Now, holy saints ! who brought that picture here ?

BERTHA.

That picture — oh, now, Leitra, thy strange tales
Made me forget what Jaromir had done.
In the east turret's old deserted rooms

He saw a lovely portrait almost hid
By the gray cobwebs and the gather'd dust ;
That he had clear'd it carefully, and thought
It should be with my favourite pictures hung —
And here it is, my own kind Jaromir.

LEITRA.

He brought it here ! — O Bertha, kneel and pray ! —
The shadowy likeness, when the actual shape
Is distant far ; the dream whose prophecy
Comes when we waken terribly distinct ;
The shriek the grave sends up in the still night,
Are not such deadly omens as that face.
My young, my good, my fair, what hath the curse
That is upon thine house to do with thee ?

BERTHA.

What do you mean? Speak, speak! — the very sound
Of my own voice is terrible! — what curse? —
Whose is this picture?

LEITRA.

It is The Ancestress!

BERTHA.

My Ancestress? — and a most lovely one :
Yet is her beauty awful : — the pale cheek
Looks as if passion had fed on its rose ;
The lips are pale, too, though their graceful curve
Fascinates in its scorn ; her loose dark air,
Wild as a sibyl's, sweeps as if 't had caught
Its wildness and its darkness from the storm ;

Her eyes, like moonlight melancholy, seem
So deep, so spiritual, — such the far light
Of stars which are a mystery ; like a queen's
For grace, and like a swan's for snow, her neck
Thrown back so haughtily ; and her black robe,
Her golden girdle with strange characters,
Suit her strange loveliness so well.

LEITRA.

Hush, hush !

Your thoughtless words sound like impiety.
I had not meant to tell her history,
But it is best you know it. Never came
That portrait here by but a simple chance.
She was a princess of the olden time,
So beautiful, that kings laid down their crowns

Like flowers before her, and her halls were throng'd
With lovers, and of life she took no thought,
Save for its pleasures ; but as years pass'd on
She felt her insecurity, and cursed
Her own fair face for fading. Suddenly
She grew more lovely, as if age to her
Were but a second youth ; again her halls
Were fill'd with worshippers, and day and night
Consumed in revels ; when, as suddenly
As summer had revisited her face,
She pass'd away. On his deathbed a monk
Told a wild legend, how one autumn eve
He leant in his confessional alone,
And a most radiant lady knelt and wept
Over the one unpardonable sin.
How for the sake of lasting loveliness

Her soul was forfeit to the evil power,
Who tempted her with beauty. Then she said
It was now mock'd by ceaseless tears, which fell,
Although in vain ; how she from shrine to shrine
Had gone in late repentant pilgrimage.
Her knees were worn with many prayers ; but still
The presence of the demon haunted her.
Then rose a spirit of strong prophecy
Upon that aged monk : he said her crime
Was fearful, so would be its punishment ;
That for her sin a curse was on her race,
Which she would witness : — sorrow, early death,
Sickness, and guilt would be her children's lot ;
That, still bound by her human sympathy,
Although debarr'd all human intercourse,
She now was doom'd to wander o'er the earth,

A witness of their misery, till not one
Remain'd of her descendants ; then the grave
Would be her resting-place, and she might hope
That the most infinite mercy of the Cross
Might sanctify a sinner's penitence.—
Bertha, this was your Ancestress. My child,
Yon portrait is an evil omen here.

BERTHA.

There is another where my heart can turn : —
Gentlest Madonna, from my early years
Thou hast been as the mother I have lost,
In patience and in comfort. Leitra,
I am too sad for more of these dark tales : —
Good night !

LEITRA.

Now blessings rest upon thee, my sweet child !
There's not a bead upon my rosary
That shall not count a prayer for thy dear sake.

SCENE III. — *The Castle Chapel.*

JAROMIR. BERTHA.

JAROMIR.

What, Bertha, is it you? I little thought
The shrouding mantle, and the hurried step,
Which raised my wonder at this midnight hour,
So cold, so damp, were those of mine own love ;

I little dream'd this dreary chapel held
So fair a saint.

BERTHA.

I pray thee do not speak to me ; I feel
As if the dead were conscious of our presence ;
And human tenderness, and human hope,
Were impious before them. Nay, but hark !
I hear a strange low sound, like grief suppress'd,
Debarr'd from words, and breaking out in sighs.

JAROMIR.

I hear it too ; the wild wind in the pines,
The mournful music of an autumn eve.
What brought thee here, to scare thyself with thoughts
That make their own reality ?

BERTHA.

To pray.

Alas ! for thee too much have I forgot
My orisons beside my mother's grave :
Till lately, never did a day go past
Without some scatter'd flowers, some holy hymn,
That kept affection fresh with piety.
It is a beautiful, a bless'd belief,
That the beloved dead, grown angels, watch
The dear ones left behind ; and that my prayers
Are welcome to my mother's ears, as when
I knelt a lisping infant at her knee ;
And that her pure and holy spirit now
Doth intercede at the eternal throne :
And thus religion in its love and hope
Unites us still — the mother and her child !

JAROMIR.

Ah, Bertha mine ! thy childhood was thrice bless'd,
Thy young mind sanctified, and after life
Made holy by the memory of the past.
I knew no mother's care to teach my lips
Those prayers that like good angels keep the heart
From uncurb'd passions, that lay waste and curse.
But Bertha, my sweet Bertha ! thou shalt be
My soul's religion, and my prayers will rise
Welcome and purified when blent with thine.
But come, methinks the funeral urn has lent
Its marble to thy cheek : thy hair is wild ;
The dew has half unloosed its graceful curl.
The lamps around burn dim in the thick air :
Come, let me wrap my cloak around thee, love ;

Thou art too delicate for such a night.
Why didst thou leave thy chamber?

BERTHA.

My nurse — O Jaromir ! she told to-night
A history of our house. I could not sleep, —
The fear of its deep terror, like a ghost,
So haunted me ; I sought my mother's grave ;
It seem'd a sanctuary, — O Jaromir !
Have you not heard of her — “ The Ancestress ? ” .

JAROMIR.

An excellent ghost story. I have led
A life too stirring for those vague beliefs
That superstition builds in solitude :
But you, my gentle lady of romance,

Whose youth has pass'd in an old castle, dark
With overhanging pines ; whose twilight hours
Are spent in ancient galleries, where the walls
Are hung with pictures of grim ancestors ;
Who art familiar with the plumed knights
Whose effigies keep guard in the old hall,
On whose black panels of the carved oak
The sunshine falls in vain ; no wonder thou
Shouldst yield these marvels such a ready faith :
But, though I fain would share thy every thought,
Feel—hope—fear—any thing like thee—at this
I cannot choose but smile.

BERTHA.

Nay, Jaromir !

Who shall deny the spiritual influence

Of the unquiet dead? — a mystery
The hidden, and the terrible.

JAROMIR.

Come, come,
This shall be argued by the cheerful fire.

BERTHA.

Look there, look there! My God, it is her face!

[*The ANCESTRESS rises from the tombs, but
only visible to BERTHA, as JAROMIR is
turned from her.*

JAROMIR.

What foolish fear is this? My Bertha, speak!
Good saints! but she is senseless.

[*Carries her out.*

SCENE IV. — *The COUNT and JAROMIR.*

COUNT.

The legends of our house ? — I'll tell you one.
There were two brothers who grew up together,
As if they had one heart ; their tasks, their sports
Were shared ; at evening side by side they slept,
At morning waked together ; when they talk'd
With all youth's eagerness of future days,
They imaged but one plan, for neither knew
Their hopes could be divided. Years pass'd on,
And never brought they with them less of change.
But when the elder came to man's estate,
There was too mark'd a difference in their lot :

The first held wealth and rank, — the younger one
Dependent ; 'tis a bitter word, and most
When bred together in equality.
And then the younger brother rashly wed,
And lovely children crowded at his knee,
Foredoom'd to the same life that he had led,
Where pride and poverty contend, and shame
Grows deeper from suppression. Years pass'd on :
At length a deadly sickness smote the Count ;
His brother, with a strange unholy joy,
Stood by the dying man ; for he was heir
To that proud castle and its wide domain,
And past loves were all lost in future hopes.
Then was a secret told him which destroy'd
Those golden dreams, — that brother had a child !
Death scoffs at worldly vanities, and death

Avow'd the secret marriage pride conceal'd.
He died ; and now his lonely orphan's fate
Was in the new Count's hands, and he play'd false :
The boy was left in poor obscurity,
The mother's claim put down, and fraud and strife
Grasp'd their inheritance. That unjust lord,
The curse was on him, — one by one they died,
The children, for whose sake he sold his soul.
One only daughter cheer'd his desolate house !
And all search for the orphan was in vain,
Till chance restored him, and her father sought
To make her his atonement.

JAROMIR.

Count, no more !
I know the history, though till now I deem'd

Myself unknown. It was with bitter thoughts
And evil hopes I sought this castle first ;
But love and kindness greeted me ; I saw
An old man with remorse upon his brow.

COUNT.

Remorse ! — for years it has encompass'd me,
Darker and darker as its shadow fell
Nearer the grave : but at your coming, hope
Enter'd the dungeon of my mind like light.
I knew you by your likeness to your father.
For years I have not dared to raise my eyes
Even upon his picture ; but to-night,
When all the lighted halls are fill'd with guests,
By blood or amity link'd to our house,
You shall be own'd before them as the heir ;

And I will look my brother in the face,
And say, Your son is happy, — pardon me.

And now for the worst penance of my sin, —
To tell my Bertha of her father's crime.
Alas ! to think that he who virtue taught,
Who fill'd her heart with piety and truth,
Should be the first to show temptation's strength ;
To prove that guilt could be within the soul,
While the false words spoke moral loveliness.

JAROMIR.

But, oh ! there needs not this. —

COUNT.

Hush ! hush

I am impatient as a wearied man

Eager to lay a weighty burthen down.
Come to me presently.

[*Exit.*

JAROMIR.

I do not feel as I should feel at this.
Acknowledged heir of a most noble house,
Beloved and loving, wherefore should the past,
Which hitherto has seem'd but as a dream,
Of which I took no heed, — why should the past
Come darkly up like an o'ertaking storm,
Whose heaviness weighs down the atmosphere
Of present hope? Which shall I curse the most
My father's pride, my uncle's avarice?
But for these, bred according to my birth,
Familiar but with honourable deeds,

My fiery youth allow'd an open field,
The name of every gallant ancestor
A bond upon my soul against disgrace,
My name had been as stainless as my crest.
But, nursed in poverty, my infant ears
Listening to curses, how must wrongs have changed
A mother's nature, when the first lisp'd words
Her child's young lips were taught, were oaths and
threats
Of deep revenge ! Brought up to scorn my state,
Yet shut out from all other, while the blood
Of my bold forefathers stirr'd in my veins,
What have they made me ? Robber — murderer !
One of the ready sword and reckless hand,
Who values blood by gold. Where art thou now,
Spirit of enterprise, that urged me on —

Spirit of vengeance, that at midnight rang
My mother's dying words within my brain, —
Where are ye now? Hush'd as the worn-out wave!
And in your stead do fear and sorrow come;
Till, even as a child that dreads the dark,
I dread the future. Bertha, thou hast struck,
As with an angel's hand, my rocky heart,
And call'd forth its pure waters: higher hopes,
Gentle affections, thankfulness to God,
And kindness towards my fellow-men,
Are gushing in my bosom's stony depths;
And all subdued and chasten'd by a sense
Of my unworthiness. No more I hold
A blind and terrible fatality
Is paramount upon this weary life —
This gulf of troubled billows — where the soul,

Like a vex'd bark, is toss'd upon the waves
Of pain and pleasure by the warring breath
Of passions, which are winds that bear it on,
And only to destruction. Never more
Shall I speak recklessly of death ; or shun
A quiet thought or solitary hour ;
Or drown that consciousness, our moral life,
In the red wine cup : now my better heart
Luxuriates in repose ; I can pass days
Stretch'd in the shade of those old cedar trees,
Watching the sunshine like a blessing fall, —
The breeze like music wandering o'er the boughs, —
Each tree a natural harp, — each different leaf
A different note, blent in one vast thanks-giving.

*[In leaning from the casement he catches a sight
of BERTHA.]*

I see her now. How more than beautiful
She paces yon broad terrace! — The free wind
Has lifted the soft curls from off her cheek,
Which yet it crimsons not, — the pure, the pale, —
Like a young saint. How delicately carved
The Grecian outline of her face! — but touch'd
With a more spiritual beauty, and more meek.
Her large blue eyes are raised up to the heav'ns,
Whose hues they wear, and seem to grow more clear
As the heart fills them. There, those parted lips, —
Prayer could but give such voiceless eloquence, —
Shining like snow her clasp'd and earnest hands,
She seems a dedicated nun, whose heart
Is God's own altar. By her side I feel
As in some holy place. My best love, mine,
Blessings must fall on one like thee!

SCENE V. — BERTHA *in her Room.*

BERTHA.

The sound of festival is in my ear,
Haunting it with faint music; the red lights
Shine fitfully reflected in the lake,
Where I have never seen aught but the moon
Mirror'd before, or the bright quiet stars.
A weight is on the air, for ev'ry breeze
Has, bird-like, folded up its wings for sleep.
It is like mockery of the silent night
To choose her hours for merriment; but thus
We struggle with all natural laws, and make
Our life a strange disorder. Yet how sweet
Comes up the distant music! — though 'tis sad.

A few brief moments, and those notes will be
But echoes to the dancers' joyous steps.
Why should they rouse in me such mournful
thoughts?

Recalling snatches of familiar songs,
I've sung to those sweet airs, all sorrowful.
I see the youthful warrior with his head
Pillow'd upon his shield, but not for sleep;
The maiden with her face upon her hands
Bow'd in its last despair. What are the words?

[Sings a few words in a low tone to herself.]

And fitfully the embers raised
A faint and passing flame;
They miss'd her from her father's hearth,
But call'd not on her name.

They knew that she was weeping
For the loved and for the dead ;
In silence and in solitude,
Must such heavy tears be shed ?

And can these notes, so long associate
With love and sorrow, thus be turn'd to mirth,
And we shall dance to what brought tears before ?

[Leaning from the casement.

How beautiful it is ! though on the air
There is the stillness of a coming storm,
And on the sky its darkness. On the west,
Like a rebellious multitude, the clouds
Are gather'd in huge masses ; but the Moon,
Like a young queen, unconscious, brightens still
A little clear blue space ; though rapidly

Her comrades, the sweet stars, sink one by one,
Lost in the spreading vapours. Yet the lake
Has not a shadow. Well may the young Moon
Forget her danger, gazing on the face
Its silver waters mirror : — all beyond
Is like the grave's obscurity ; more near
All is most tranquil beauty and repose.
The garden flowers are paler than by day,
And sweeter. What an altar of perfume
Is the musk-rose, beneath my casement twined !
Dipping its golden tresses in the lake,
Leans the laburnum, and beneath its shade
Sleep my two swans, as white, as still as snow.
— The wind is rising, and a yellow haze,
Like a volcano's smoke, makes heaven less dark
To be more fearful. I can now discern

Our ancient avenue of cedar trees, —
How black they look, and with what heavy strength
The giant branches move ! — the weary air
Like a deep breath comes from them. — Ah, how dark !
It is the first cloud that has touch'd the moon : —
Her loveliness has conquer'd, — oh, not yet ! —
One huge cloud, and another. I could deem
The evil powers did war on high to-night.
And are there such that o'er humanity
Hold influence, — the terrible, the wild, —
Inscrutable as fear, — the ministers
To our unholy passions ? These are they
Who dazzle with unrighteous wealth, and make
Our sleep temptation ; they who fill its dreams
With passionate strife and guilt, until the mind
Is grown familiar with the sight of blood.

I do believe in them : — by those strange crimes
Man's natural heart would shrink from,—by the fear
That comes with midnight, — by that awful face,
Which, though they say it was a fantasy,
I know I saw, — I do believe in them.

Enter JAROMIR.

JAROMIR.

O Bertha, you are beautiful to-night !
My fairy Princess, with your golden hair
Loosed from the braids which almost hid its wealth,
Descending in a sunny shower of curls,
And lighted up with diamonds ; and your waist, —
That rainbow girdle of all precious stones, —
How well it suits its slender gracefulness !

Our halls are fill'd with guests. There, take one
glance

At yonder mirror ; and now let me lead

My lovely cousin to the festal rooms.

Come, Bertha.

SCENE VI. — *A Hall filled with Guests.*

The COUNT, JAROMIR, and BERTHA.

FIRST LADY.

This is delightful. Why the grim old hall
Is fill'd with torches ; every shining shield
And gilded helm reflects the light : the crowd

Of our gay nobles have not left a gem
Within their ancient coffers.

SECOND LADY.

Yet methinks
There is a shadow on this gaiety,
Flung from departed years ; yon empty helm,
The last memorial of some mighty chief,
Now even as the dust upon his plume ;
Those ghastly portraits bringing back the dead.
I cannot bear to look upon a face
Warm with the hues of life, from which long since
All likeness to the human form has pass'd.

FIRST LADY.

This is too fanciful : — come, join the dance.

FIRST NOBLEMAN.

A gallant cavalier this new-found Count :
He'll wear his honours gaily.

SECOND NOBLEMAN.

Such excess
Of mirth's exuberance visits not for good.
An evil fate is written on his brow ;
The dark, the ominous, — his very joy
Is like a desperate man's : — I like it not.
He is not one over whose head the curse
Will pass away that hangs upon his house.

FIRST NOBLEMAN.

Yonder is Bertha ; but how very pale ! —
More like a nun on whom the moonlight falls
In some lone cell, than a betrothed bride.

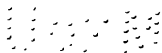
My gentle Bertha, have you not a smile
For an old friend to-night?

BERTHA.

My very kindest, if you did but know
The happiness of one familiar face.
Let us rest here awhile, the open air
Is so refreshing in its natural sweetness.
My head is dizzy with excess of light ;
Let us but join with looks the festival
Awhile from this alcove.

FIRST NOBLEMAN.

How miser-like
The wealth of spring is heap'd ! Say, are not these
Among your favourite flowers ?



BERTHA.

Blue hyacinths !

Oh, do not show them me ; they fill my eyes
With tears too soft for such a scene as this.

FIRST NOBLEMAN.

Is happiness so wholly past from thee,
That its remembrance is turn'd into pain ?
Or is thy heart, thy woman's heart, so caught
By this gay revel, that a serious thought
Is counted as a pleasure lost ?

BERTHA.

O no !

But now thy words give utterance to mine,
Which else might seem so grave. I've lived too long

In the deep quiet of our ancient halls ;
Have dwelt too much in solitude, whose fence
Was broken but by old beloved friends,
To bear this revelry of festival,
And not feel too oppress'd for happiness.
I am spectator, not partaker, here.
To me it seems more like a pageant made
To represent mirth, than the mirth itself.
I have known many that did act a joy
In which they had no part. At first I gazed
In wonder and delight on lips that wore
A smile as if by custom, and on eyes
Which seem'd but made to look bland courtesy.
This did not last. I saw the cheek grow red
With ill-dissembled anger, at some slight ;
The eye flash sudden fire, and the harsh lip

Curve into scorn : then all grow calm again, —
Is it not like those lands, where, I have read,
Beneath an outward show of fairest flowers
The soil has veins of subterranean flame,
Whose fiery sparkles start to sudden life
When we least dream of them. I'd rather breathe
One moment's breath of morning on the hills,
Than all the Indian woods that ever burnt
On silver censers ; and would rather see
One leaf fall from the bough which misses not
Its loss, than look upon the purple sweep
Of these rich tapestries.

Ah, 'tis his voice !

JAROMIR *in the distance.*

Health and long happiness, my friends !

BERTHA, *coming forward.*

Who are those strangers? They are arm'd; and see
How rudely do they force their way!

OFFICERS *rush up the room, and surround*

JAROMIR, *exclaiming,*

Our prisoner!

FIRST OFFICER.

Count Herman, we are sorry thus to break
Upon your gaiety.

COUNT HERMAN.

Off, off! your prisoner is my nearest kin,
The noble heir of these insulted halls.

FIRST OFFICER.

But not the less the robber Udolph, too.

JAROMIR.

Discover'd, baffled — well, I can but die.
I will not shame a name at which so oft
The brave have trembled. I am Udolph : come,
I do defy you : one and all come on.
Is there no rescue in my father's house ?

*[Some of the young Cavaliers come forward ;
they fight ; when BERTHA flings herself
before JAROMIR, who is mortally wounded,
and receives another blow destined for him.*

BERTHA.

My father ! —

[Dies.

JAROMIR.

There, take my sword ; I cannot see her face.

Oh, for one hour of life but to revenge !

COUNT HERMAN.

I see her : — 'tis the Ancestress !

[*The ANCESTRESS glides across the stage,
beckoning the COUNT.*

COUNT.

The last and the accursed of my house,

Will no one let me touch his hand ?

Enter SERVANTS.

The castle is on fire ! — a lightning flash

Has set the eastern turrets in a blaze.

Fly for your lives !

SECOND NOBLEMAN.

We must take hence this miserable man.

FIRST NOBLEMAN.

He's dead !

[*The flames burst into the room, and they fly.*

The ANCESTRESS is seen to kneel by the dead, with her hands raised to heaven, till the falling ruins of the Castle hide the whole.

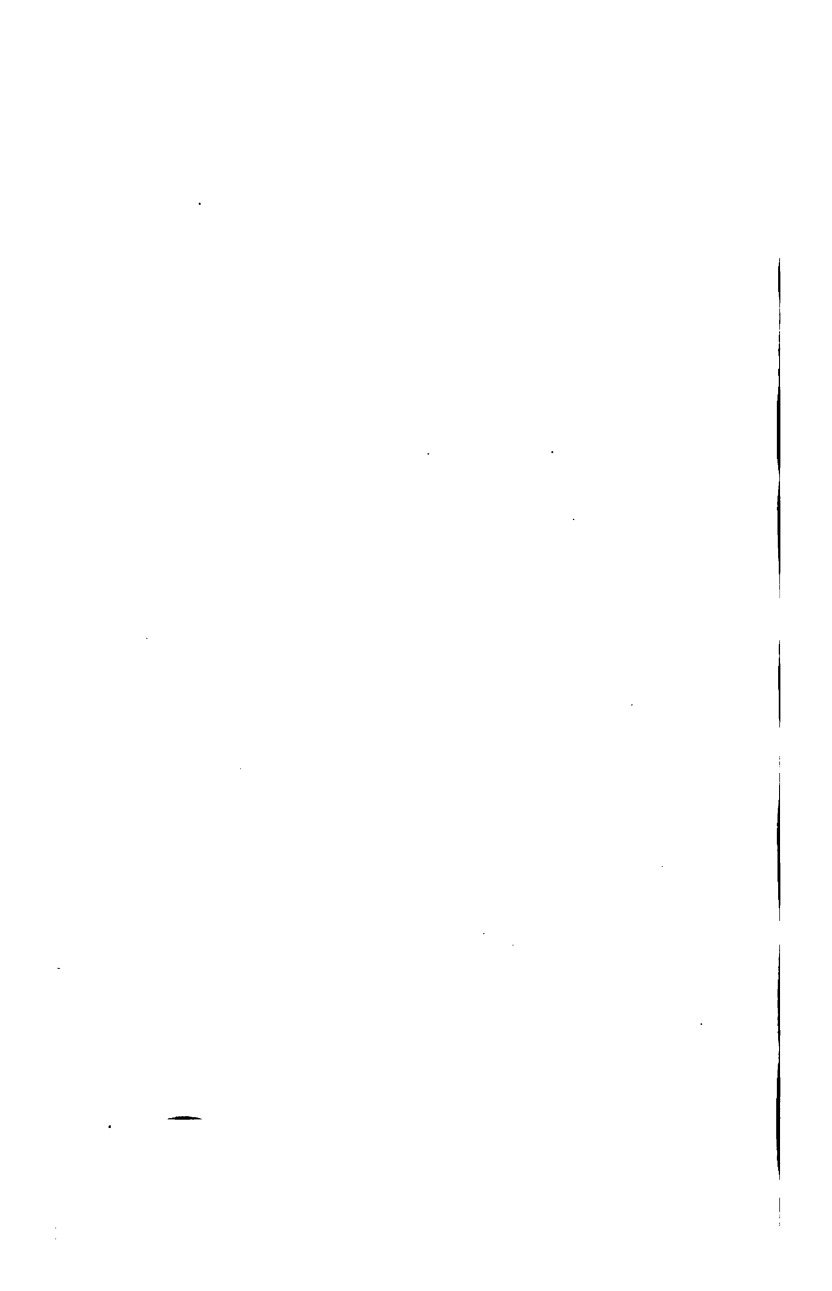
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NOTE.

The hint of "The Ancestress" is taken from a German play by Grillparzer, called "The Ahnfrau." The following is the account of it, contained in Blackwood's Magazine for September 1825: — "The guilt of the Ahnfrau having introduced a spurious heir into the noble family of Borotin, she cannot rest in her grave until her crime is expiated, and its consequences remedied, by the extinction of the intrusive line. This is finally effected in the play through a series of horrible calamities. The son of the Count having been stolen in his infancy by a robber, is brought up in his supposed father's profession; falls in love, as unwittingly as *Œdipus*, with his sister; kills his father in a scuffle with the Bow-street officers of Poland; and finally dies in the embrace of his ghostly Ahnfrau, whom he mistakes for *Bertha*. The old lady, when her penance is completed, by the disasters of her descendants, which, with truly disinterested maternal love, she had vainly endeavoured to prevent, ends the tragedy by going quietly home into her hitherto untenanted monument."

I have taken very considerable liberties with the original plot ; first, in making the guilt of the Ancestress supernatural, as believing such most likely to incur supernatural punishment ; secondly, in making Jaromir cousin instead of brother, and thus avoiding the most revolting of crimes ; and, thirdly, in awarding something of the character of poetical justice, as it is the Count's own offence which brings down the punishment.

POETICAL PORTRAITS.



POETICAL PORTRAITS.

No. I.

O no, sweet lady, not to thee
That set and chilling tone,
By which the feelings on themselves
So utterly are thrown :
For mine has sprung upon my lips,
Impatient to express
The haunting charm of thy sweet voice
And gentlest loveliness.
A very fairy queen thou art,
Whose only spells are on the heart.

The garden it has many a flower,
But only one for thee —
The early graced of Grecian song,
The fragrant myrtle tree ;
For it doth speak of happy love,
The delicate, the true.
If its pearl buds are fair like thee,
They seem as fragile too ;
Likeness, not omens, for love's power
Will watch his own most precious flower.

Thou art not of that wilder race
Upon the mountain side,
Able alike the summer sun
And winter blast to bide ;

But thou art of that gentler growth,
Which asks some loving eye,
To keep it in sweet guardianship,
Or it must droop and die ;
Requiring equal love and care,
Even more delicate than fair.

I cannot paint to thee the charm
Which thou hast wrought on me ;
Thy laugh, so like the wild bird's song
In the first bloom-touch'd tree.
You spoke of lovely Italy,
And of its thousand flowers ;
Your lips had caught the music breath
Amid its summer bow'rs.

And can it be a form like thine
Has braved the stormy Appennine ?

I'm standing now with one white rose
Where silver waters glide :
I've flung that white rose on the stream, —
How light it breasts the tide !
The clear waves seem as if they love
So beautiful a thing ;
And fondly to the scented leaves
The laughing sunbeams cling.
A summer voyage — fairy freight ; —
And such, sweet lady, be thy fate !

No. II.

AH ! little do those features wear
The shade of grief, the soil of care ;
The hair is parted o'er a brow
Open and white as mountain snow,
And thence descends in many a ring,
With sun and summer glistening.
Yet something on that brow has wrought
A moment's cast of passing thought ;
Musing of gentle dreams, like those
Which tint the slumbers of the rose :
Not love, — love is not yet with thee, —
But just a glimpse what love may be :
A memory of some last night's sigh,
When flitting blush and drooping eye

Answer'd some youthful cavalier,
Whose words sank pleasant on thine ear,
To stir, but not to fill the heart ; —
Dreaming of such, fair girl, thou art. —

Thou blessed season of our spring,
When hopes are angels on the wing ;
Bound upwards to their heavenly shore,
Alas ! to visit earth no more.

Then step and laugh alike are light,
When, like a summer morning bright,
Our spirits in their mirth are such,
As turn to gold whate'er they touch.
The past ! 'tis nothing, — childhood's day
Has roll'd too recently away,
For youth to shed those mournful tears
That fill the eye in older years,

When Care looks back on that bright leaf
Of ready smiles and short-lived grief.
The future ! — 'tis the promised land,
To which Hope points with prophet hand,
Telling us fairy tales of flowers
That only change for fruit — and ours.
Though false, though fleeting, and though vain,
Thou blessed time I say again. —

Glad being, with thy downcast eyes,
And visionary look that lies
Beneath their shadow, thou shalt share
A world, where all my treasures are —
My lute's sweet empire, fill'd with all
That will obey my spirit's call ;
A world lit up by fancy's sun !
Ah ! little like our actual one.

No. III.

His hand is on the snowy sail,
His step is on the prow,
And back the cold night-winds have flung
The dark curls from his brow ;
That brow to which his native heaven
A something of itself has given.

But all too mix'd with earthly stain,
The nameless shadowy care,
Which tells, that though Heaven gave it birth,
Its home has not been there ;
And here, the earth and heaven seem blent
In one discordant element.

It wears our nature's nobler part ;
That spirit which doth spurn
The weary bondage of our world,
And show what man can earn ;
Where, led by honourable pride,
Hero and sage are deified ;—

Those high imaginings which make
The glory which they hope ;
Fine-wrought aspirings, lofty aims,
Which have in youth such scope ;
Like tides which, haunted by the moon,
Rise but, alas ! to fall too soon.

Vain are these dreams, and vain these hopes ;
And yet 'tis these give birth

To each high purpose, generous deed,
That sanctifies our earth.

He who hath highest aim in view,
Must dream at first what he will do.

Upon that youthful brow are traced
High impulses like these ;
But all too purposeless, like gales
That wander o'er the seas ;
Not winds that bear the vessel on,
Fix'd to one point, and only one.

And meaner workings have deform'd
His natural noble mind ;
Those wretched aims which waste the ore
For happier use design'd.

And petty wishes, idle praise,
Destroy the hopes of better days.

And hath no earlier vision taught
A more exalted creed?
Alas! that such a mind should waste
Its powers away, to feed
That wretched vanity which clings
To life's debasing, paltry things.

The worthlessness of common praise,
The dry rot of the mind,
By which its temple secretly
But fast is undermined.
Alas! the praise given to the ear
Ne'er was nor e'er can be sincere—

And does but waste away the mind
On which it preys : — in vain
Would they in whom its poison lurks
A worthier state attain.
Indifference proud, immortal aim,
Had, aye, the demigods of fame.

The dew of night falls cold around,
Yet can it not allay
The fever burning on thy cheek,
That eats thy life away ;
For thou dost know thy birthright sold
For even less than his of old.

Thou know'st what thou hast power to be,
Thou know'st, too, what thou art ;

And heavily does discontent

Sit rankling at thy heart ;

And thou dost mask thy grief the while

With scornful sneer, and bitter smile.

But yet thou art too indolent

From such weak bonds to free

Thy better self, and urge thy strength

To be what thou might'st be ;

Thou dost repent the past, and blame,

And yet thy future is the same.

Ay, leave thy rudder to the wave,

Thy sail upon the wind,

Leave them to chance, and they will be

Fit likeness of thy mind :

Unguided sail, unmaster'd prow,
Are only emblems ; — What art thou ?

No. IV.

HIS brow is pale with high and passionate thoughts,
That come from heaven like lightning, and consume,
E'en while they brighten ; youth has lost its hopes :
Those sweet and wandering birds, that make its
spring

So happy with their music, — these are gone :
All scared by one, a vulture, that doth feed
Upon the life-blood of the throbbing heart —
The hope of immortality ! — that hope,
Whose altar is the grave, whose sacrifice
Is life — bright, beautiful, and breathing life.

He stands amid the revellers with a joy,
A scarcely conscious joy, in their delight;
In it he has no part, — he stands alone;
But the deep music haunts his dreaming ear, —
But the fair forms flit o'er his dreaming eye, —
And exquisite illusions fill his soul
With loveliness to pour in future song.

He leant beside a casement, and the moon
Shed her own stillness o'er the hectic cheek
Whereon the fever of the mind had fed;
His eyes have turn'd towards th' eternal stars,
Drinking the light into their shadowy depths,
Almost as glorious and as spiritual.
The night-wind touch'd his forehead, with it ran
A faint slight shudder through his wasted frame, —
Alas! how little can bring down our thoughts

From their most lofty communings with heaven,
To poor mortality ! — that passing chill
Recall'd those bitter feelings that attend
Career half follow'd, and the goal unwon :
He thought upon his few and unknown years,
How much his power, how little it had done ;
And then again the pale lip was compress'd
With high resolve, the dark eye flash'd with hope
To snatch a laurel from the grasp of death,
For the green memory of an early grave.

No. V.

Thy beauty ! not a fault is there ;
No queen of Grecian line
E'er braided more luxuriant hair
O'er forehead more divine.

The light of midnight's starry heaven
Is in those radiant eyes ;
The rose's crimson life has given
That cheek its morning dyes.

Thy voice is sweet, as if it took
Its music from thy face ;
And word and mien, and step and look,
Are perfect in their grace.

And yet I love thee not : thy brow
Is but the sculptor's mould :
It wants a shade, it wants a glow, —
It is less fair than cold.

Where are thy blushes, where thy tears?

Thy cheek has but one rose :

No eloquence of hopes and fears

Disturbs its bright repose.

Thy large dark eyes grow not more dark

With tears that swell unshed :

Alas ! thy heart is as the ark

That floated o'er the dead.

Hope, feeling, fancy, fear, and love

Are in one ruin hurl'd ;

Fate's dreary waters roll above

Thy young and other world.

And thou hast lived o'er scenes like these,
The terrible, the past,
Where hearts must either break or freeze, —
And thine has done the last.

Thou movest amid the heartless throng
With school'd and alter'd brow :
Thy face has worn its mask so long,
It is its likeness now.

Where is the colour that once flush'd
With every eager word ?
Where the sweet joyous laugh, that gush'd
Like spring songs from the bird ?

Where are the tears a word once brought —

The heart's sweet social rain ?

Where are the smiles that only sought

To see themselves again ?

I knew thee in thine earlier hours,

A very summer queen

For some young poet's dream : — those flow'rs

Are just what thou hast been, —

Wild flow'rs, all touch'd with rainbow hues,

Born in a morning sky,

Lighted with sunshine, fill'd with dews,

Made for a smile and sigh.

But now I look upon thy face,
A very pictured show,
Betraying not the slightest trace
Of what may work below.

Farewell, affection ! — selfish, changed,
Thine it no more may be ;
From love thou hast thyself estranged, —
It could not dwell with thee.

No. VI.

The light is kindling in his eye,
The colour on his cheek ;
And thoughts, the passionate, the deep,
Their charmed silence break ;

Yet not to pour themselves in song,
But in those burning words
That come when some chance touch has waked
The spirit's secret chords.

How eloquent, how beautiful
Like morning in the north
Melting away the dreary ice,
His noble mind came forth !

He stood the centre of the ring,
Awakening in each breast
Feelings and thoughts, forgotten, though
Their noblest and their best.

'Twas but a moment while they own'd
The youthful poet's sway ;
A beacon light upon the hill,
To warn and die away.

Again his downcast eye was dim,
Again his cheek was pale ;
Again around his beating heart
Closed its accustom'd veil.

A moment's pause, a moment's praise,
Sufficed to change the scene ;
And careless word and careless laugh
Arose where mind had been.

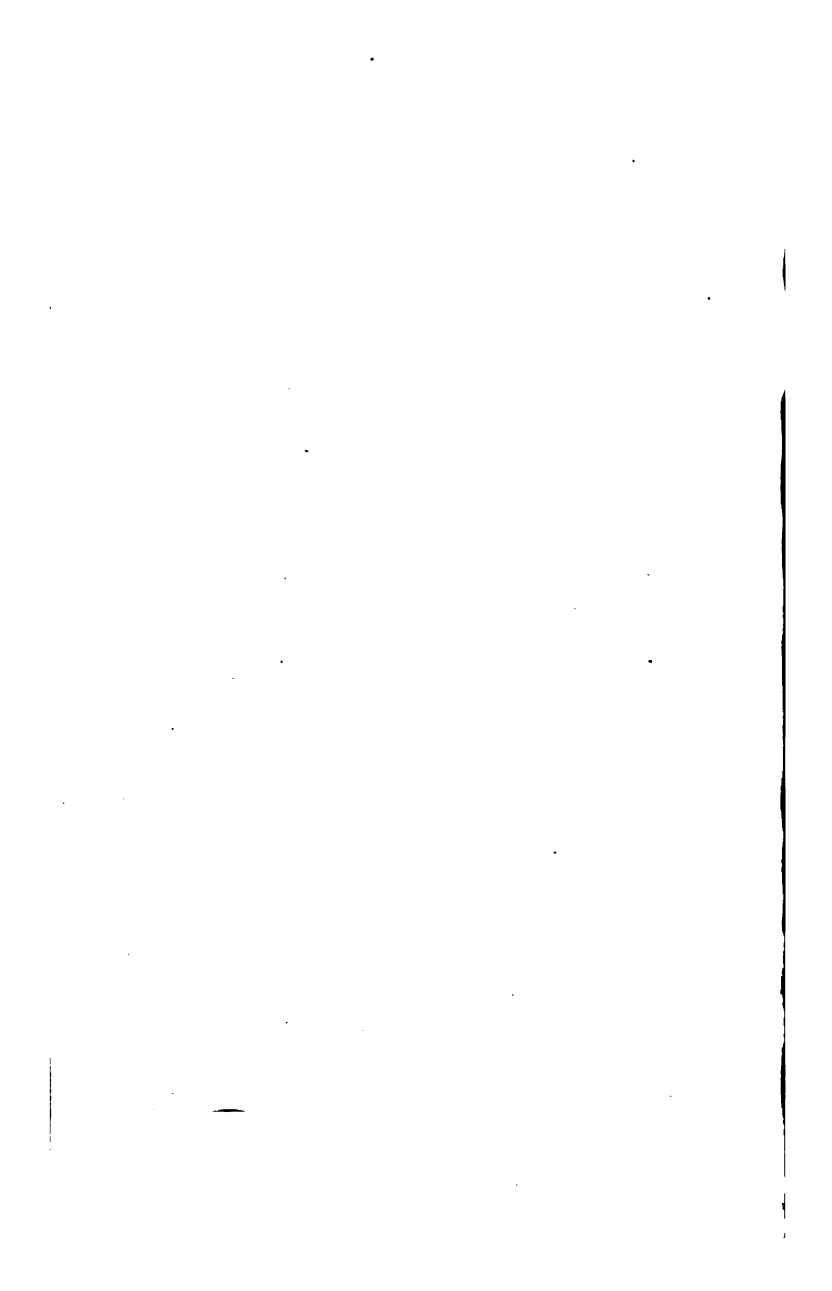
So flings the lamp upon the wind
Its bright and dying flame : —
I thought, alas, the waste of life,
The vanity of fame !

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

Chance notes struck from the lute — fancies and thoughts —
Shadows that haunt the poet's fairy land.

Love's words are writ on rose-leaves, but with tears.

These are the dreams that light my solitude :
Warrior thoughts — had I been a young knight,
And curb'd a gallant steed, and worn a sword, —
Heaven knows I often wish it ! — sadness, signs
I fancy many a cheek betrays of love ;
Records of beauty, that has seem'd to me
A thing for worship ; thoughts that sprung from flowers ;
Feelings on which to meditate is all
Woman's philosophy ; sorrows that flung
Darkness upon my heart ; unkindness, wrong,
Gentle affection too ; all that hath made
My minstrel annals, are upon these leaves.



THE NEGLECTED ONE.

AND there is silence in that lonely hall,
Save where the waters of the fountain fall,
And the wind's distant murmuring, which takes
Sweet messages from every bud it wakes.
'Tis more than midnight; all the lamps are gone,
Their fragrant oils exhausted, — all but one,
A little silver lamp beside a scroll,
Where a young maiden leant, and pour'd her soul,
In those last words, the bitter and the brief.
How can they say confiding is relief?
Light are the woes that to the eyelids spring,
Subdued and soften'd by the tears they bring;

But there are some too long, too well conceal'd,
Too deeply felt, — that are but once reveal'd :
Like the withdrawing of the mortal dart,
And then the life-blood follows from the heart ;
Sorrow, before unspoken by a sigh,
But which, once spoken, only hath to die. —

Young, very young, the lady was, who now
Bow'd on her slender hand her weary brow :
Not beautiful, save when the eager thought
In the soft eyes a sudden beauty wrought :
Not beautiful, save when the cheek's warm blush
Grew eloquent with momentary flush
Of feeling, that made beauty, not to last,
And scarcely caught, so quickly is it past.
— Alas ! she knew it well ; too early thrown
Mid a cold world, the unloved and the lone,

With no near kindred ties on whom could dwell
Love that so sought to be beloved as well.
Too sensitive for flattery, and too kind
To bear the loneliness by fate assign'd,
Her life had been a struggle : long she strove
To fix on things inanimate her love ;
On pity, kindness, music, gentle lore,
All that romance could yield of fairy store.
In vain ! she loved : — she loved, and from that hour
Gone were the quiet loves of bird or flower ;
The unread book dropp'd listless on her knee,
The untouch'd lute hung on the bending tree,
Whose unwreathed boughs no more a pleasant
 shade
For the lone dreamings of her twilight made.

— Well might she love him : every eye was turn'd
On that young knight, and bright cheeks brighter
burn'd,

Save one, that grew the paler for his sake :

Alas ! for her, whose heart but beat to break ;

Who knew too well, not hers the lip or eye

For which the youthful lover swears to die.

How deep, how merciless, the love repress,

That robs the silent midnight of its rest ;

That sees in gather'd crowds but one alone ;

That hears in mingled footsteps only one ;

That turns the poet's page, to only find

Some mournful image for itself design'd ;

That seeks in music, but the plaining tone

Which secret sorrow whispers is its own !

Alas for the young heart, when love is there,
Its comrade and its confidant, despair !

How often leant in some unnoticed spot,
Her very being by the throng forgot,
Shrunk back to shun the glad lamp's mocking ray,
Pass'd many a dark and weary hour away,
Watching the young, the beautiful, the bright,
Seeming more lovely in that lovely light ;
And as each fair face glided through the dance,
Stealing at some near mirror one swift glance,
Then, starting at the contrast, seek her room,
To weep, at least, in solitude and gloom !
And he, her stately idol, he, with eye
Dark as the eagle's in a summer sky,
And darker curls, amid whose raven shade
The very wild wind amorously delay'd,

With that bright smile, which makes all others dim,
So proud, so sweet, — what part had she in him ?
And yet she loved him : who may say, be still,
To the fond heart that beats not at our will ?

'Twas too much wretchedness : — the convent cell,
There might the maiden with her misery dwell.
And that, to-morrow was her chosen doom :
There might her hopes, her feelings, find a tomb.
Her feelings ! — no : pray, struggle, weep, condemn, —
Her feelings, — there was but one grave for them.
'Twas her last night, and she had look'd her last,
And she must live henceforward in the past.
She linger'd in the hall, — he had been there ;
Her pale lips grew yet paler with the prayer
That only ask'd his happiness. She took
A blank leaf from an old emblazon'd book,

Which told love's chronicles ; a faint hope stole, —
A sweet light o'er the darkness of her soul —
Might she not leave remembrance, like the wreath,
Whose dying flowers their scents on twilight
 breathe ;

Just one faint tone of music, low and clear,
Coming when other songs have left the ear ?
Might she not tell him how she loved, and pray
A mournful memory for some distant day ?
She took the scroll : — what ! bare perhaps to scorn
The timid sorrow she so long had borne !
Silent as death, she hid her face, for shame
In rushing crimson to her forehead came ;
Through the small fingers fell the bitter rain,
And tremblingly she closed the leaves again.
— The hall is lit with rose, that morning hour,
Whose lights are colour'd by each opening flower ;

A sweet bird by the casement sat and sang
A song so glad, that like a laugh it rang,
While its wings shook the jessamine, till the bloom
Floated like incense round that joyous room.
— They found the maiden : still her face was bow'd,
As with some shame that might not be avow'd ;
They raised the long hair which her face conceal'd, —
And she is dead, — her secret unreveal'd.

A NIGHT IN MAY.

A night not sacred to Spring's opening leaves,
But one of crowded festival.

LIGHT and glad through the rooms the gay music
is waking,

Where the young and the lovely are gather'd to-
night;

And the soft cloudless lamps, with their lustre, are
making

A midnight hour only than morning less bright.

There are vases, — the flowers within them are
breathing

Sighs almost as sweet as the lips that are near ;
Light feet are glancing, white arms are wreathing, —
O temple of pleasure ! thou surely art here.

I gazed on the scene ; 'twas the dream of a minute ;
But it seem'd to me even as fairy land fair :
'Twas the cup's bright inside ; and on glancing
within it,

What but the dregs and the darkness were there ?

— False wave of the desert, thou art less beguiling
Than false beauty over the lighted hall shed :
What but the smiles that have practised their
smiling,

Or honey words measured, and reckon'd as said ?

Oh, heart of mine ! turn from the revellers before
thee ;

What part hast thou in them, or have they in thee?
What was the feeling that too soon came o'er thee? —
Weariness ever that feeling must be.

Praise — flattery — opiates the meanest, yet
sweetest,

Are ye the fame that my spirit hath dream'd ?
Lute, when in such scenes, if homage thou meetest,
Say, if like glory such vanity seem'd ?

O for some island far off in the ocean,
Where never a footstep has press'd but mine own ;
With one hope, one feeling, one utter devotion
To my gift of song, once more, the lovely, the lone !

My heart is too much in the things which profane it ;
The cold, and the worldly, why am I like them ?
Vanity ! with my lute chords I must chain it,
Nor thus let it sully the minstrel's best gem.

It rises before me, that island, where blooming,
The flowers in their thousands are comrades
for me ;
And where if one perish, so sweet its entombing,
The welcome it seems of fresh leaves to the tree.

I'll wander among them when morning is weeping
Her earliest tears, if such pearls can be tears ;
When the birds and the roses together are sleeping,
Till the mist of the daybreak, like hope fulfill'd,
clears.

Grove of dark cypress, when noontide is flinging

Its radiance of light, thou shalt then be my shrine ;

I'll listen the song which the wild dove is singing,

And catch from its sweetness a lesson for mine.

And when the red sunset at even is dying,

I'll watch the last blush as it fades on the wave ;

While the wind, through the shells in its low music

sighing,

Will seem like the anthem peal'd over its grave.

And when the bright stars which I worship are

beaming,

And writing in beauty and fate on the sky,

Then, mine own lute, be the hour for thy dreaming,

And the night-flowers will open and echo thy sigh.

Alas ! but my dream has like sleep's visions vanish'd ;

The hall and the crowd are before me again :

Sternly my sweet thoughts like fairies are banish'd ;

Nay, the faith which believed in them now seems
but vain.

I left the gay circle :— if I found it dreary,

Were all others there, then, the thoughtless and
glad ?

Methinks that fair cheek in its paleness look'd
weary,

Methinks that dark eye in its drooping was sad.

— I went to my chamber, — I sought to be lonely, —

I leant by the casement to catch the sweet air ;

The thick tears fell blinding ; and am I then only

Sad, weary, although without actual care ?

The heart hath its mystery, and who may reveal it;
Or who ever read in the depths of their own? —
How much, we never may speak of, yet feel it,
But, even in feeling it, know it unknown !

Sky of wild beauty, in those distant ages
Of which time hath left scarce a wreck or a name,
Say were thy secrets laid bare to the sages,
Who held that the stars were life's annals of
flame ?

Spirit, that ruleth man's life to its ending,
Chance, Fortune, Fate, answer my summoning
now ;
The storm o'er the face of the night is descending, —
Fair moon, the dark clouds hide thy silvery brow.

Let these bring thy answer, and tell me if sadness

For ever man's penance and portion must be ;

Doth the morning come forth from a birthplace of
gladness ?

Is there peace, is there rest, in thine empire or
thee ?

Spirit of fate, from yon troubled west leaning,

As its meteor-piled rack were thy home and thy
shrine,

Grief is our knowledge, 'twill teach me thy meaning,

Although thou but speak'st it in silence and sign.

I mark'd a soft arch sweep its way over heaven ;

It spann'd as it ruled the fierce storm which it
bound ;

The moonshine, the shower, to its influence seem'd
given,

And the black clouds grew bright in the beautiful
round.

I look'd out again, but few hues were remaining

On the side nearest earth ; while I gazed, they
were past :

As a steed for a time with his curb proudly straining,
Then freed in its strength, came the tempest at
last.

And this was the sign of thy answer, dark spirit !

Alas ! and such ever our pathway appears ;
Tempest and change still our earth must inherit, —
Its glory a shade, and its loveliness tears.

WARNING.

PRAY thee, maiden, hear him not !
Take thou warning by my lot ;
Read my scroll, and mark thou all
I can tell thee of thy thrall.
Thou hast own'd that youthful breast
Treasures its most dangerous guest ;
Thou hast own'd that Love is there :
Though now features he may wear,
Such as would a saint deceive,
Win a sceptic to believe,
Only for a time that brow,
Will seem what 'tis seeming now.

I have said, heart, be content !
For Love's power o'er thee is spent.
That I love not now, oh true ! —
I have bade such dreams adieu :
Therefore deemest thou my heart
Saw them tranquilly depart ;
That they past, nor left behind
Wreck and ruin in my mind.
Thou art in the summer hour
Of first passion's early power ;
I am in the autumn day,
Of its darkness, and decay.
— Seems thine idol now to thee
Even as a divinity ?
Such the faith that I too held ;
Not the less am I compell'd

All my heart-creed to gainsay,
Own my idol gilded clay,
And yet pine to dream again
What I know is worse than vain.
Ay, I did love, and how well,
Let thine own fond weakness tell :
Still upon the soften'd mood
Of my twilight solitude,
Still upon my midnight tear,
Rises image all too dear ;
Dark and starry eyes, whose light
Make the glory of the night ;
Brow like ocean's morning foam,
For each noble thought a home.
Well such temple's fair outline
Seem'd the spirit's fitting shrine.

— Is he hero, who hath won
Fields we shrink to think upon?
Patriot, on whose gifted tongue
Senates in their wonder hung?
Sage, before whose gifted eyes
Nature spreads her mysteries?
Bard, to whose charm'd lute is given
All that earth can breathe of heaven? —
Seems thy lover these to thee?
Even more mine seem'd to me.
Now, my fond belief is past;
Strange, methinks, if thine should last.
“ Be content, thou lovest not now : ”
Free, thou sayest, — dream'st thou how?
Loathing wouldst thou shun dismay'd
Freedom by such ransom paid.

— Girl, for thee I'll lay aside
Veil of smiles and mask of pride ;
Shrowds that only ask of Fate
Not to seem so desolate.

— I am young, — but age's snow
Hides not colder depths below ;
I am gay, — but such a light
Shines upon the grave by night.

— Yet mine is a common tale ;
Hearts soon changed, and vows were frail ;
Each one blamed the other's deed,
Yet both felt they were agreed ;
Ne'er again might either prove
Those sweet fallacies of love.

— Still for what so vain I hold
Is my wasted heart grown cold.

Can hopes be again believed,
When their sweetest have deceived ?
Can affection's chain be trusted,
When its dearest links have rusted ?
Can life's dreams again be cherish'd,
When its dearest ones have perish'd ?
I know Love will not endure ; —
Nothing now to me seems sure.
— Maiden, by the thousand tears,
Lava floods on my first years ;
By the nights, when burning pain
Fed upon my heart and brain ;
By the wretched days now past,
By the weary days to last ;
Be thou warn'd, for still the same
Is Love, beneath whatever name.

Keep thy fond faith like a thing
Where Time never change may bring.
Vow thee to thine idol's shrine, —
Then, maiden ! read thy fate in mine.

THE NAMELESS GRAVE.

A NAMELESS grave, — there is no stone

To sanctify the dead :

O'er it the willow droops alone,

With only wild flowers spread.

“ Oh, there is nought to interest here,

No record of a name,

A trumpet call upon the ear,

High on the roll of fame.

“ I will not pause beside a tomb
Where nothing calls to mind
Aught that can brighten mortal gloom,
Or elevate mankind ; —

“ No glorious memory to efface
The stain of meaner clay ;
No intellect whose heavenly trace
Redeem'd our earth : — away ! ”

Ah, these are thoughts that well may rise
On youth's ambitious pride ;
But I will sit and moralise
This lowly stone beside.

Here thousands might have slept, whose name
Had been to thee a spell,
To light thy flashing eyes with flame, —
To bid thy young heart swell.

Here might have been a warrior's rest,
Some chief who bravely bled,
With waving banner, sculptured crest,
And laurel on his head.

That laurel must have had its blood,
That blood have caused its tear, —
Look on the lovely solitude —
What ! wish for warfare here !

A poet might have slept,—what ! he
Whose restless heart first wakes
Its life-pulse into melody,
Then o'er it pines and breaks ? —

He who hath sung of passionate love,
His life a feverish tale :—
Oh ! not the nightingale, the dove
Would suit this quiet vale.

See, I have named your favourite two, —
Each had been glad to crave
Rest 'neath this turf's unbroken dew,
And such a nameless grave !

FANTASIES,

INSCRIBED TO

T. CROFTON CROKER, Esq.

1.

I'M weary, I'm weary, — this cold world of ours ;
 I will go dwell afar, with fairies and flowers.
 Farewell to the festal, the hall of the dance,
 Where each step is a study, a falsehood each glance ;
 Where the vain are displaying, the vapid are yawning ;
 Where the beauty of night, the glory of dawning,
 Are wasted, as Fashion, that tyrant, at will
 Makes war on sweet Nature, and exiles her still.

2.

I'm weary, I'm weary, — I'm off with the wind :
Can I find a worse fate than the one left behind ?
— Fair beings of moonlight, gay dwellers in air,
O show me your kingdom ! O let me dwell there !
I see them, I see them ! — how sweet it must be
To sleep in yon lily ! — is there room in't for me ?
I have flung my clay fetters ; and now I but wear
A shadowy seeming, a likeness of air.

3.

Go harness my chariot, the leaf of an oak ;
A butterfly stud, and a tendril my yoke.
Go swing me a hammock, the poles mignonette ;
I'll rock with its scent in the gossamer net.

Go fetch me a courser: yon reed is but slight,
Yet far is the distance 'twill bear me to-night.
I must have a throne,—ay, yon mushroom may stay,
It has sprung in a night, 'twill be gather'd next day:
And fit is such throne for my brief fairy reign;
For, alas! I'm but dreaming, and dreams are but vain.

REVENGE.

Ay, gaze upon her rose-wreathed hair,
And gaze upon her smile ;
Seem as you drank the very air
Her breath perfumed the while :

And wake for her the gifted line,
That wild and witching lay,
And swear your heart is as a shrine,
That only owns her sway.

'Tis well : I am revenged at last, —
Mark you that scornful cheek, —
The eye averted as you pass'd,
Spoke more than words could speak.

Ay, now by all the bitter tears
That I have shed for thee, —
The racking doubts, the burning fears, —
Avenged they well may be —

By the nights pass'd in sleepless care,
The days of endless woe ;
All that you taught my heart to bear,
All that yourself will know.

I would not wish to see you laid
Within an early tomb ;
I should forget how you betray'd,
And only weep your doom :

But this is fitting punishment,
To live and love in vain,—
Oh my wrung heart, be thou content,
And feed upon his pain.

Go thou and watch her lightest sigh, —
Thine own it will not be ;
And bask beneath her sunny eye, —
It will not turn on thee.

'Tis well : the rack, the chain, the wheel,

Far better had'st thou proved ;

Ev'n I could almost pity feel,

For thou art not beloved.

A SUMMER DAY.

SWEET valley, whose streams flow as sparkling and
bright

As the stars that descend in the depths of the night;
Whose violets fling their rich breath on the air,
Sweet spendthrifts of treasure the Spring has flung
there.

My lot is not with thee, 'tis far from thine own ;
Nor thus, amid Summer and solitude thrown :
But still it is something to gaze upon thee,
And bless earth, that such peace on her bosom can be.

My heart and my steps both grow light as I bound
O'er the green grass that covers thy beautiful
ground ;

And joy o'er my thoughts, like the sun o'er the
leaves,

A blessing in giving and taking receives.

I have heap'd up thy flowers, the wild and the sweet,
As if fresh from the touch of the night-elfin's feet ;
A bough from thy oak, and a sprig from thy broom,—
I take them as keepsakes to tell of thy bloom.

Their green leaves may droop, and their colours
may flee,

As if dying with sorrow at parting from thee ;

And my memory fade with them, till thou wilt but
seem

Like the fitting shape morning recalls of a dream.

Let them fade from their freshness, so leave they
behind

One trace, like faint music, impress'd on the mind ;

One leaf or one flower to memory will bring

The light of thy beauty, the hope of thy spring.

THE WREATH.

NAY, fling not down those faded flowers,
Too late they 're scatter'd round;
And violet and rose-leaf lie
Together on the ground.

How carefully this very morn
Those buds were cull'd and wreathed !
And, mid the cloud of that dark hair,
How sweet a sigh they breathed !

And many a gentle word was said
Above their morning dye,—
How that the rose had touch'd thy cheek,
The violet thine eye.

Methinks, if but for memory,
I should have kept these flowers ;
Ah ! all too lightly does thy heart
Dwell upon vanish'd hours.

Already has thine eager hand
Stripp'd yonder rose-hung bough ;
The wreath that bound thy raven curls
Thy feet are on it now.

That glancing smile, it seems to say

“Thou art too fanciful :

What matters it what roses fade,

While there are more to cull ?”

Ay, I was wrong to ask of thee

Such gloomy thoughts as mine :

Thou in thy Spring, how shouldst thou dream

Of Autumn's pale decline ?

Young, lovely, loved,—oh ! far from thee

Life's after-dearth and doom ;

Long ere thou learn how memory clings

To even faded bloom !

SONG.

OH never another dream can be
Like that early dream of ours,
When the fairy Hope lay down to sleep,
Like a child, among the flowers.

But Hope has waken'd since, and wept,
Like a rainbow, itself away ;
And the flowers have faded, and fallen around —
We have none for a wreath to-day.

Now Wisdom wakes in the place of Hope,

And our hearts are like winter hours :

Ah ! after-life has been little worth

That early dream of ours.

THE DYING CHILD.

The woman was in abject misery — that worst of poverty,
which is haunted by shame — the only relic left by better days.
She shrunk from all efforts at recovery, refused to administer
the medicines, and spoke of the child's death but as a blessing.

My God! and is the daily page of life
Darken'd with wretchedness like this?

HER cheek is flush'd with fever red;

Her little hand burns in my own;

Alas! and does pain rack her sleep?

Speak! for I cannot bear that moan.

Yet sleep, I do not wish to look
 Again within those languid eyes;
Sleep, though again the heavy lash
 May never from their beauty rise.

— Aid, hope for me? — now hold thy peace,
 And take that healing cup away :
Life, length of life, to that poor child ! —
 It is not life for which I pray.

Why should she live for pain, for toil,
 For wasted frame, and broken heart ;
Till life has only left, in death,
 With its base fear of death to part !

How could I bear to see her youth
Bow'd to the dust by abject toil,
Till misery urge the soul to guilt,
From which its nature would recoil?

The bitterness of poverty,
The shame that adds the worst to woe, —
I think upon the life I've known,
Upon the life that I shall know.

Look through yon street, — a hundred lamps
Are lighting up the revels there, —
Hark! you can hear the distant laugh
Blending with music on the air.

The rich dwell there, who know not want ;

Who loathe that wretchedness whose name

Is there an unfamiliar sound : —

Why is not my estate the same ?

I may have sinn'd, and punishment

For that most ignorant sin incur ;

But be the curse upon my head, —

Oh, let it not descend to her !

Sleep, dear one ! 'tis a weary world ;

Sleep the sweet slumber of the grave !

Vex me no more with thy vain words :

What worth is that you seek to save ?

Tears — tears — I shame that I should weep ;

I thought my heart had nerved my eye : —

I should be thankful, and I will, —

There, there, my child, lie down and die !

A SUMMER EVENING'S TALE.

COME, let thy careless sail float on the wind ;
Come, lean by me, and let thy little boat
Follow like thee its will ; come, lean by me.
Freighted with roses which the west has flung,
Over its waters on the vessel glides,
Save where the shadowy boughs shut out the sky,
And make a lovely darkness, while the wind
Stirs the sad music of their plaining leaves.
The sky grows paler, as it burnt away
Its crimson passion ; and the falling dew
Seems like the tears that follow such an hour.

I'll tell thee, love, a tale, — just such a tale
As you once said my lips could breathe so well ;
Speaking as poetry should speak of love,
And asking from the depths of mine own heart
The truth that touches, and by what I feel
For thee, believe what others' feelings are.
There, leave the sail, and look with earnest eyes ;
Seem not as if the worldly element
In which thou movest were of thy nature part,
But yield thee to the influence of those thoughts
That haunt thy solitude ; — ah, but for those
I never could have loved thee ; I, who now
Live only in my other life with thee ;
Out on our beings' falsehood ! — studied, cold,
Are we not like that actor of old time,
Who wore his mask so long, his features took

Its likeness? — thus we feign we do not feel,
Until our feelings are forgotten things,
Their nature warp'd in one base selfishness ;
And generous impulses, and lofty thoughts,
Are counted folly, or are not believed :
And he who doubts or mocks at excellence
(Good that refines our nature, and subdues),
Is riveted to earth by sevenfold chains.
Oh, never had the poet's lute a hope,
An aim so glorious as it now may have,
In this our social state, where petty cares
And mercenary interests only look
Upon the present's littleness, and shrink
From the bold future, and the stately past, —
Where the smooth surface of society
Is polish'd by deceit, and the warm heart

With all its kind affections' early flow,
Flung back upon itself, forgets to beat,
At least for others ; — tis the poet's gift
To melt these frozen waters into tears,
By sympathy with sorrows not our own,
By wakening memory with those mournful notes,
Whose music is the thoughts of early years,
When truth was on the lip, and feelings wore
The sweetness and the freshness of their morn.
Young poet, if thy dreams have not such hope
To purify, refine, exalt, subdue,
To touch the selfish, and to shame the vain
Out of themselves, by gentle mournfulness,
Or chords that rouse some aim of enterprise,
Lofty and pure, and meant for general good ;
If thou hast not some power that may direct

The mind from the mean round of daily life,
Waking affections that might else have slept,
Or high resolves, the petrified before,
Or rousing in that mind a finer sense
Of inward and external loveliness,
Making imagination serve as guide
To all of heaven that yet remains on earth,—
Thine is a useless lute: break it, and die.

Love mine, I know my weakness, and I know
How far I fall short of the glorious goal
I purpose to myself; yet if one line
Has stolen from the eye unconscious tears,
Recall'd one lover to fidelity
Which is the holiness of love, or bade
One maiden sicken at cold vanity,
When dreaming o'er affection's tenderness,

The deep, the true, the honour'd of my song, —
If but one worldly soil has been effaced,
That song has not been utterly in vain.
All true deep feeling purifies the heart.
Am I not better by my love for you?
At least, I am less selfish; I would give
My life to buy you happiness: — Hush, hush!
I must not let you know how much I love, —
So to my tale. — 'Twas on an eve like this,
When purple shadows floated round, and light,
Crimson and passionate, o'er the statues fell,
Like life, for that fair gallery was fill'd
With statues, each one an eternity
Of thought and beauty: there were lovely shapes,
And noble ones; some which the poet's song
Had touch'd with its own immortality;

Others whose glory flung o'er history's page
Imperishable lustre. There she stood,
Forsaken ARIADNE; round her brow
Wreathed the glad vine-leaves; but it wore a shade
Of early wretchedness, that which once flung
May never be effaced: and near her leant
ENDYMION, and his spiritual beauty wore
The likeness of divinity; for love
Doth elevate to itself, and she who watch'd
Over his sleeping face, upon it left
The brightness of herself. Around the walls
Hung pictures, some which gave the summer all
Summer can wish, a more eternal bloom;
And others in some young and lovely face
Embodied dreams into reality.
There hung a portrait of St. ROSALIE,

She who renounced the world in youth, and made
Her heart an altar but for heavenly hopes —
Thrice blessed in such sacrifice. Alas !
The weakness, yet the strength of earthly ties !
Who hath not in the weariness of life
Wish'd for the wings of morning or the dove,
To bear them heavenward, and have wish'd in vain ?
For wishes are effectual but by will,
And that too much is impotent and void
In frail humanity ; and time steals by
Sinful and wavering, and unredeem'd.
Bent by a casement, whence her eye could dwell
Or on the countenance of that sweet saint,
Or the fair valley, where the river wound
Like to a fairy thing, now light, now shade,
Which the eye watches in its wandering,

A maiden pass'd each summer eye away.

Life's closing colour was upon her cheek,

Crimson as that which marks the closing day :

And her large eyes, the radiant and the clear,

Wore all the ethereal beauty of that heaven

Where she was hastening. Still her rosebud mouth

Wore the voluptuous sweetness of a spring

Haunted by fragrance and by melody.

Her hair was gather'd in a silken net,

As if its luxury of auburn curls

Oppress'd the feverish temples all too much ;

For you might see the azure pulses beat

In the clear forehead painfully ; and oft

Would her small hands be press'd upon her brow,

As if to still its throbbing. Days pass'd by,

And thus beside that casement would she spend

The summer evenings. Well she knew her doom,
And sought to linger with such loveliness :
Surely it soothed her passage to the grave.

One gazed upon her, till his very life
Was dedicate to that idolatry
With which young Love makes offering of itself.
In the vast world he only saw her face.
The morning blush was lighted up by hope, —
The hope of meeting her ; the noontide hours
Were counted for her sake ; in the soft wind,
When it had pass'd o'er early flowers, he caught
The odour of her sigh ; upon the rose
He only saw the colour of her cheek.
He watch'd the midnight stars until they wore
Her beauty's likeness — love's astrology.

His was the gifted eye, which grace still touch'd
As if with second nature ; and his dreams,
His childish dreams, were lit by hues from heaven —
Those which make genius. Now his visions wore
A grace more actual, and one worshipp'd face
Inspired the youthful sculptor, till like life
His spirit warm'd the marble. Who shall say
The love of genius is a common thing,
Such as the many feel — half selfishness,
Half vanity? — for genius is divine,
And, like a god, doth turn its dwelling-place
Into a temple ; and the heart redeem'd
By its fine influence is immortal shrine
For love's divinity. In common homes
He dies, as he was born, in nothingness ;
But love, inspiring genius, makes the world

Its glorious witness ; hence the poet's page
Wakens its haunting sympathy of pain ;
And hence the painter with a touch creates
Feelings imperishable. 'Twas from that hour
 ANONA took his inspiration : love
Made him the sculptor of all loveliness ;
The overflowing of a soul imbued
By most ideal grace, the memory
Which lingers round first passion's sepulchre.
— Why do I say first love ? — there is no second.
Who asks in the same year a second growth
Of spring leaves from the tree, corn from the
 field ? —
They are exhausted. Thus 'tis with the heart : —
'Tis not so rich in feeling or in hope
To bear that one be crush'd, the other faded,

Yet find them ready to put forth again,
It does not always last; man's temper is
Often forgetful, fickle, and throws down
The temple he can never build again;
But when it does last, and that asks for much,—
A fix'd yet passionate spirit, and a mind
Master of its resolves,—when that love lasts,
It is in noblest natures. After years
Tell how CANOVA felt the influence.
They never spoke: she look'd too spiritual,
Too pure for human passion; and her face
Seem'd hallow'd by the heaven it was so near.
And days pass'd on:—it was an eve in June—
How ever could it be so fair a one?—
And she came not: hue after hue forsook

The clouds, like Hope, which died with them, and
night

Came all too soon and shadowy. He rose,
And wander'd through the city, o'er which hung
The darkness of his thoughts. At length a strain
Of ominous music wail'd along the streets :
It was the mournful chanting for the dead ;
And the long tapers flung upon the air
A wild red light, and show'd the funeral train :
Wreaths—O what mockeries ! — hung from the bier ;
And there, pale, beautiful, as if in sleep,
Her dark hair braided graceful with white flowers,
She lay, — his own beloved one !

No more, no more ! — love, turn thy boat to land, —
I am so sorrowful at my own words.

Affection is an awful thing ! — Alas !

We give our destiny from our own hands,

And trust to those most frail of all frail things,

The chances of humanity.

— The wind hath a deep sound, more stern than
sweet ;

And the dark sky is clouded ; tremulous,

A few far stars — how pale they look to-night ! —

Touch the still waters with a fitful light.

There is strange sympathy between all things,

Though in the hurrying weariness of life

We do not pause to note it : the glad day,

Like a young king surrounded by the pomp

Of gold and purple, sinks but to the shade

Of the black night : — the chronicle I told

Began with hope, fair skies, and lovely shapes,
And ended in despair. Even thus our life
In these has likeness ; with its many joys,
Its fears, its eagerness, its varying page,
Mark'd with its thousand colours, only tends
To darkness, and to silence, and the grave !

LINES OF LIFE.

Orphan in my first years, I early learnt
To make my heart suffice itself, and seek
Support and sympathy in its own depths.

WELL, read my cheek, and watch my eye, —
Too strictly school'd are they,
One secret of my soul to show,
One hidden thought betray.

I never knew the time my heart
Look'd freely from my brow ;
It once was check'd by timidity,
'Tis taught by caution now.

I live among the cold, the false,
And I must seem like them ;
And such I am, for I am false
As those I most condemn.

I teach my lip its sweetest smile,
My tongue its softest tone ;
I borrow others' likeness, till
Almost I lose my own.

I pass through flattery's gilded sieve,
Whatever I would say ;
In social life, all, like the blind,
Must learn to feel their way.

I check my thoughts like curbed steeds
 That struggle with the rein;
 I bid my feelings sleep, like wrecks
 In the unfathom'd main.

I hear them speak of love, the deep,
 The true, and mock the name;
 Mock at all high and early truth,
 And I too do the same.

I hear them tell some touching tale,
 I swallow down the tear;
 I hear them name some generous deed,
 And I have learnt to sneer.

I hear the spiritual, the kind,
The pure, but named in mirth ;
Till all of good, ay, even hope,
Seems exiled from our earth.

And one fear, withering ridicule,
Is all that I can dread ;
A sword hung by a single hair
For ever o'er the head.

We bow to a most servile faith,
In a most servile fear ;
While none among us dares to say
What none will choose to hear.

And if we dream of loftier thoughts,
 In weakness they are gone ;
 And indolence and vanity
 Rivet our fetters on.

Surely I was not born for this !
 I feel a loftier mood
 Of generous impulse, high resolve,
 Steal o'er my solitude !

I gaze upon the thousand stars
 That fill the midnight sky ;
 And wish, so passionately wish,
 A light like theirs on high.

I have such eagerness of hope
To benefit my kind ;
And feel as if immortal power
Were given to my mind.

I think on that eternal fame,
The sun of earthly gloom,
Which makes the gloriousness of death,
The future of the tomb —

That earthly future, the faint sign
Of a more heavenly one ;
— A step, a word, a voice, a look, —
Alas ! my dream is done.

And earth, and earth's debasing stain,
 Again is on my soul ;
 And I am but a nameless part
 Of a most worthless whole.

Why write I this? because my heart
 Towards the future springs,
 That future where it loves to soar
 On more than eagle wings.

The present, it is but a speck
 In that eternal time,
 In which my lost hopes find a home,
 My spirit knows its clime.

Oh ! not myself, — for what am I ? —
The worthless and the weak,
Whose every thought of self should raise
A blush to burn my cheek.

But song has touch'd my lips with fire,
And made my heart a shrine ;
For what, although alloy'd, debased,
Is in itself divine.

I am myself but a vile link
Amid life's weary chain ;
But I have spoken hallow'd words,
Oh do not say in vain !

My first, my last, my only wish,
 Say will my charmed chords
 Wake to the morning light of fame,
 And breathe again my words ?

Will the young maiden, when her tears
 Alone in moonlight shine —
 Tears for the absent and the loved —
 Murmur some song of mine ?

Will the pale youth by his dim lamp,
 Himself a dying flame,
 From many an antique scroll beside,
 Choose that which bears my name ?

Let music make less terrible

The silence of the dead ;

I care not, so my spirit last

Long after life has fled.

THE BATTLE FIELD.

It was a battle field, and the cold moon
Made the pale dead yet paler. Two lay there ;
One with the ghastly marble of the grave
Upon his face ; the other wan, but yet
Touch'd with the hues of life, and its warm breath
Upon his parted lips.

HE sleeps — the night wind o'er the battle field
Is gently sighing ;
Gently, though each breeze bear away
Life from the dying.

He sleeps, — though his dear and early friend
 A corpse lies by him ;
Though the ravening vulture and screaming crow
 Are hovering nigh him.

He sleeps, — where blood has been pour'd like rain,
 ' Another field before him ;
And he sleeps as calm as his mother's eyes
 Were watching o'er him.

To-morrow that youthful victor's name
 Will be proudly given,
By the trumpet's voice, and the soldier's shout,
 To the winds of heaven.

Yet life, how pitiful and how mean,

Thy noblest story ;

When the high excitement of victory,

The fulness of glory,

Nor the sorrow felt for the friend of his youth,

Whose corpse he 's keeping,

Can give his human weakness force

To keep from sleeping !

And this is the sum of our mortal state,

The hopes we number, —

Feverish waking, danger, death,

And listless slumber.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

THERE is no change upon the air,
No record in the sky ;
No pall-like storm comes forth to shrowd
The year about to die.

A few light clouds are on the heaven,
A few far stars are bright ;
And the pale moon shines as she shines
On many a common night.

Ah, not in heaven, but upon earth,
Are signs of change exprest ;
The closing year has left its mark
On human brow and breast.

How much goes with it to the grave
Of life's most precious things !
Methinks each year dies on a pyre,
Like the Assyrian kings.

Affections, friendships, confidence, —
There 's not a year hath died
But all these treasures of the heart
Lie with it side by side.

The wheels of time work heavily ;
We marvel day by day
To see how from the chain of life
The gilding wears away.

Sad the mere change of fortune's chance,
And sad the friend unkind ;
But what has sadness like the change
That in ourselves we find ?

I 've wept my castle in the dust,
Wept o'er an alter'd brow ;
'Tis far worse murmuring o'er those tears,
“ Would I could weep them now ! ”

Oh, for mine early confidence,
Which like that graceful tree
Bent cordial, as if each approach
Could but in kindness be !

Then was the time the fairy Hope
My future fortune told,
Or Youth, the alchemist, that turn'd
Whate'er he touch'd to gold.

But Hope's sweet words can never be
What they have been of yore :
I am grown wiser, and believe
In fairy tales no more.

And Youth has spent his wealth, and bought
The knowledge he would fain
Change for forgetfulness, and live
His dreaming life again.

I 'm weary, weary : day-dreams, years,
I 've seen alike depart,
And sullen Care and Discontent
Hang brooding o'er my heart.

Another year, another year, —
Alas ! and must it be
That Time's most dark and weary wheel
Must turn again for me ?

In vain I seek from out the past
Some cherish'd wreck to save ;
Affection, feeling, hope, are dead, —
My heart is its own grave !

SONG.

I PRAY thee let me weep to-night,
 'Tis rarely I am weeping ;
My tears are buried in my heart,
 Like cave-lock'd fountains sleeping.

But oh, to-night, those words of thine
 Have brought the past before me ;
And shadows of long-vanish'd years
 Are passing sadly o'er me.

The friends I loved in early youth,
The faithless and forgetting,
Whom, though they were not worth my love,
I cannot help regretting; —

My feelings, once the kind the warm,
But now the hard, the frozen;
The errors I've too long pursued,
The path I should have chosen; —

The hopes that are like failing lights
Around my pathway dying;
The consciousness none others rise,
Their vacant place supplying; —

The knowledge by experience taught,
The useless, the repelling ;
For what avails to know how false
Is all the charmer's telling ?

I would give worlds, could I believe
One half that is profess'd me ;
Affection ! could I think it Thee,
When Flattery has caress'd me ?

I cannot bear to think of this, —
Oh, leave me to my weeping ;
A few tears for that grave my heart,
Where hope in death is sleeping.

STANZAS

TO THE

AUTHOR OF "MONT BLANC," "ADA," &c.

THY hands are fill'd with early flowers,

Thy step is on the wind ;

The innocent and keen delight

Of youth is on thy mind ; —

That glad fresh feeling that bestows

Itself the pleasure which it knows,

The pure, the undefined ;

And thou art in that happy hour

Of feeling's uncurb'd, early power.

Yes, thou art very young, and youth,
Like light, should round thee fling
The sunshine thrown round morning's hour,
The gladness given to spring:
And yet upon thy brow is wrought
The darkness of that deeper thought,
Which future time should bring.
What can have traced that shadowy line
Upon a brow so young as thine?

'Tis written in thy large dark eyes,
Fill'd with unbidden tears ;
The passionate paleness on thy cheek,
Belying thy few years.
A child, yet not the less thou art
One of the gifted hand and heart,

Whose deepest hopes and fears
Are omen-like : the poet's dower
Is even as the prophet's power.

Thy image floats before my eyes,
Thy book is on my knee ;
I'm musing on what now thou art,
And on what thou wilt be.

Dangerous as a magic spell,
Whose good or evil none may tell,
The gift that is with thee ;
For Genius, like all heavenly light,
Can blast as well as bless the sight.

Thou art now in thy dreaming time :
The green leaves on the bough,

The sunshine turning them to gold,
Are pleasures to thee now ;
And thou dost love the quiet night,
The stars to thee are a delight ;
And not a flower can grow,
But brings before thy haunted glance
The poet days of old romance.

With thine " own people " dost thou dwell,
And by thine own fireside ;
And kind eyes keep o'er thee a watch,
Their darling and their pride.
I cannot choose but envy thee ;
The very name of home to me
Has been from youth denied ;
But yet it seems like sacred ground,
By all earth's best affections bound.

'Tis well for thee ! thou art not made

Struggle like this to share ;

Ill might that gentle, loving heart

The world's cold conflict bear ;

Where selfish interest, falsehood, strife,

Strain through their gladiatorial life ;

Save that the false ones wear

Seeming and softness and a smile,

As if guilt were effaced by guile.

I dare not speak to thee of fame,

That madness of the soul,

Which flings its life upon one cast,

To reach its desperate goal.

Still the wings destined for the sky

Will long their upward flight to try,

And seek to dare the whole,
Till, space and storm and sunshine past,
Thou find'st thou art alone at last.

But love will be thy recompense,
The love that haunts thy line ;
Ay, dream of love, but do not dream
It ever will be thine.
His shadow, not himself, will come ;
Too spiritual to be his home,
Thy heart is but his shrine ;
For vainest of all earthly things
The poet's vain imaginings.

Go, still the throbbing of thy brow,
The beating of thy heart ;

Unstring thy lute, and close thy page,

And choose an humbler part ;

Turn not thy glistening eyes above,

Dwell only in thy household love,

Forgetting what thou art ;

And yet life like what this must be

Seems but a weary lot for thee.

Or trust thee to thy soaring wing,

Awake the gifted lay ;

Fling life's more quiet happiness

For its wild dreams away.

'Tis a hard choice : on either side

Thy heart must with itself divide,

Be thy doom what it may.

Life's best to win, life's best to lose, —

The lot is with thee, maiden, — choose.

Ah no ! — the choice is not, thine own, —

The spirit will rebel ;

The fire within the poet's heart

Is fire unquenchable.

Far may its usual curse depart,

And light, but not consume, thy heart !

Sweet minstrel, fare thee well !

And may for once the laurel wreath

Not wither all that grows beneath !

THE MOUNTAIN GRAVE.

SHE sate beside the rock from which arose
A mountain rivulet's blue wanderings;
And there, with careless hand, cast leaves and flowers
To float upon the surface, or to sink,
As the wind listed, for she took no heed,
Nor watch'd their progress. Suddenly she ceased,
While pass'd a cloud across her deep blue eyes:
"Are ye not symbols of me, ye fair flowers?
Thus in mere recklessness my wilful hand
Has wasted the whole beauty of a spring,
And I have thrown your fragrant lives away

In one vain moment's idleness." 'Tis strange
How the heart, overpress'd with its own thoughts,—
And what oppresses the young heart like love? —
Grows superstitious, finds similitudes
And boding fears in every change and chance.
She bow'd her face upon her hands and wept,
When suddenly her bright hair was flung back,
Her cheek was turn'd to crimson, and the tears
Lay like dew on the rose. " Mine AGATHA !
What! weeping, love? I am not late to-night;
Our meeting star but trembles in the sky,
In light as glistening as thine own sweet eyes."

His words had a strange sound ; she had forgot
Her sorrow and its cause in the deep joy
His presence brought. She gazed upon his face,
As if 'twould vanish if she did not gaze ;

She stay'd her breath to listen to his words,
Scarce daring credit her own happiness.
There stood they, with the rich red light of eve
Yet lingering, like a glory, on their heads,
In the snow mirror of the mountain peak ; —
A bright laburnum grew beside, — its boughs
Flung over them a golden shower : the wave
That wander'd at their feet was clear as Hope ;
Their shapes were outlined in it ; and one star,
Reflected too, shone like an augury
Of good between them. — There they leant, while
hours
Pass'd, as time had no boundaries. O earth,
Yet art thou touch'd by heaven, though only
touch'd, —
Thy pleasures are but rainbows, which unite

The glad heavens with thee in their transient beauty,
Then melt away again upon the clouds.

O youth, and love, which is the light of youth,

Why pass ye as the morning? — life goes on,

But like a bark that, first in carelessness,

And afterwards in fear of each rough gale,

Has flung her richest freightage overboard.

Who is there, though young still, yet having lost

The warmth, the freshness, morning's dew and light,

Can bear to look back on their earlier hours,

When faith made its own happiness, and the heart

Was credulous of its delight, and gave

Its best affections forth so trustingly,

Content to love, not doubting of return?

'Twas AGATHA broke the sweet silence first :

“ My father told me he had seen to-day

The gathering, HERMAN, of your hardy troops :
You led them, mounted on your snow-white steed.—
He bade me fling to-night a double chain
Of sighs and smiles, for the young warrior's truth
Was sorely tried by absence. You will go,
Like our bold river, into other lands,
On its own proud free course ; whilst I shall send
After thee hopes and prayers, like the poor leaves
That I have cast upon the waves to perish.”

She spoke in mirth ; yet as she spoke, her words
Caught such a sadness in their omen tone,
In silence HERMAN took her hand, and gazed
Upon her face as he would picture it
Within his inmost soul. A brow more fair
Ne'er caught the silver softness of moonlight.
Her cheek was as the mirror of her heart,

Eloquent in its blushes, and its hues
Now varied like the evening's ; — but 'tis vain
To dwell on youthful lovers' parting hour.
A first farewell, with all its passionate words,
Its lingering looks, its gushing tears, its hopes
Scarcely distinguish'd from its fears, its vows, —
They are its least of suffering ; for the heart
Feels that it needs them not, yet breathes them still,
Making them oracles. But the last star
Sinks down amid the mountains : — he must go ;
By daybreak will his gallant vassals look
To hear their chieftain's bugle. Watch'd she there
His dark plume cast its shadow on the snows,
His rapid foot bound on from crag to crag : —
The rocks have hid him from her eager view,
But still she hears the echo of his step, —

That dies too into silence ; then she feels

Her utter loneliness : — he is quite gone !

Long days have pass'd — that evening star hath
left

Its throne of beauty on the snow-crown'd hill,

Yielding its place to winter's thousand lights ; —

Long days have pass'd : — again the twilight hour

Smiles in the influence of that lovely star ;

The bright laburnum's golden wealth is heap'd,

The spring's first treasure, and beneath its shade

Rests AGATHA alone : — what ! still alone ?

A few short words will tell what change has
wrought

In their once love : it is a history

That would suit half mankind. In its first spring, —

For the heart has its spring of bud and bloom
Even as has the year, — it found a home
For all its young affections, gentle thoughts,
In his true maiden's bosom ; and the life
He dream'd of was indeed a dream — 'twas made
Of quiet happiness : but forth he went
Into the wild world's tumult. As the bloom
Fades from the face of nature, so the gloss
Of his warm feelings faded with their freshness ;
Ambition took the place of Love, and Hope
Fed upon fiery thoughts, aspiring aims ;
And the bold warrior, favourite of his king,
If that he thought of his first tenderness,
Thought of it but with scorn, or vain excuse,
And in her uncomplaining silence read
But what he wish'd, — oblivion ; and at last

Her very name had faded, like the flower
Which we have laid upon our heart, and there
Have suffer'd it to die. A second spring
Has loosed the snowy waters, and has fill'd
The valleys with her joy; but, AGATHA,
It is not spring for thee; it has not brought
Its sunny beauty to thy deep blue eyes,
Its dew to freshen thy lips' languid rose,
And its bloom is not for thy cheek. One year,
And thou didst hide thy misery, and seem,
With thy gay songs and smiles and gladsome words,
Still in thine aged father's sight the same.
His pride was wounded by young Herman's falsehood,
But not his happiness; and when he died,
It was with blessings breathed in trusting hope

Upon that dear child's head, whose tenderness
Had made him half forget the path he trod
Was hurrying to the grave. But he was dead,
And AGATHA stood in his lonely halls,
An orphan, last of all her race and name,
Without one tie of kindred or of love
To bind her to the earth. Yet few there were
That dream'd the hidden grief that lurk'd within.
Too kind, too gentle not to be beloved,
Many a vassal mourn'd the coming death,
Whose sign was written on his lady's cheek.

She died in silence, without sign or word
That might betray the memory of her fate ;
But when they heard her last request, to lie
Beneath the shade of the laburnum tree,
Which grew beside the mountain rivulet,

Many a cheek grew red, and brow grew dark,
And many a whisper'd word recall'd the time
When, in unworldly and in happy youth,
The valley's chieftain and the mountain girl
Made it their favourite haunt ; all call'd to mind,
Then was the morning colour on her cheek,
Then her life was as summer in its smile,
And all felt, as they laid her in the grave,
It was the lorn rest of the broken heart.

Years pass'd : — the green moss had o'ergrown
the stone

Which mark'd the orphan maiden's lowly grave,
When rode an armed train beside the stream.
Why does One pause beneath the lonely tree,
And watch the starlight fall on the white stone ?
That martial step, that haughty brow, so traced

With lines of the world's warfare, are not such
As linger with a ready sympathy

O'er the foot-prints of sorrow ; yet that cheek
Was startled into paleness as he read

AGATHA ! — and the mossy date which told
She had been tenant of that tomb for years.

HERMAN, — for he it was had sought the vale,

But upon warlike mission — if he thought

Of his once love, it was but how to shun

The meek reproaching of her mournful eye,

Or else to think she had like him forgot.

But dead ! — so young ! — he had not dream'd of this. —

He knelt him down, and like a child he wept : —

Gentle affections struggled with, subdued —

Tenderness, long forgotten, now burst forth

Like rain drops from the summer sky. Those tears

Pass'd, and their outward trace ; but in his heart
A fountain had sprung up which dried no more.
He went on in his course, proud, bold, and never
The name of AGATHA fell from his lips.
But he died early, and in his last field
He pray'd the brother of his arms to take
His heart, and lay it in the distant grave
Where AGATHA was sleeping.

THE END.

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